COMPACT EDITION
OF RUDYARD KIPLING
VOLUME FIVE

The Phantom 'Rickshaw
&
Other Stories

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The Man Who Would Be King

The Phantom 'Rickshaw

Story of the Gadsbys · Wee Willie Winkie
The Ship that Found Herself
The Tomb of His Ancestors
"Bread upon the Waters"
The Brushwood Boy
"The City of Dreadful Night"
Georgie Porgie
With the Night Mail

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

Volume Five

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK · · LONDON

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THE PHANTOM 'RICKSHAW'

THE PHANTOM 'RICKSHAW AND OTHER STORIES.

THE PHANTOM 'RICKSHAW

May no ill dreams disturb my rest,
Nor Powers of Darkness me molest.

Evening Hymn.

ONE of the few advantages that India has over England is a great Knowability. After five years' service a man is directly or indirectly acquainted with the two or three hundred Civilians in his Province, all the Messes of ten or twelve Regiments and Batteries, and some fifteen hundred other people of the non-official caste. In ten years his knowledge should be doubled, and at the end of twenty he knows, or knows something about, every Englishman in the Empire, and may travel anywhere and everywhere without paying hotel-bills.

Globe-trotters who expect entertainment as a right have, even within my memory, blunted this

open-heartedness, but none the less to-day, if you belong to the Inner Circle and are neither a Bear nor a Black Sheep, all houses are open to you, and our small world is very, very kind and helpful.

Rickett of Kamartha stayed with Polder of Kumaon some fifteen years ago. He meant to stay two nights, but was knocked down by rheumatic fever, and for six weeks disorganized Polder's establishment, stopped Polder's work, and nearly died in Polder's bedroom. Polder behaves as though he had been placed under eternal obligation by Rickett, and yearly sends the little Ricketts a box of presents and toys. It is the same everywhere. The men who do not take the trouble to conceal from you their opinion that you are an incompetent ass, and the women who blacken your character and misunderstand your wife's amusements, will work themselves to the bone in your behalf if you fall sick or into serious trouble.

Heatherlegh, the Doctor, kept, in addition to his regular practice, a hospital on his private account — an arrangement of loose boxes for Incurables, his friend called it — but it was really a sort of fitting-up shed for craft that had been damaged by stress of weather. The weather in India is often sultry, and since the tale of bricks is always a fixed quantity, and the only liberty allowed is permission to work overtime and get no thanks, men

occasionally break down and become as mixed as the metaphors in this sentence.

Heatherlegh is the dearest doctor that ever was, and his invariable prescription to all his patients is, "Lie low, go slow, and keep cool." He says that more men are killed by overwork than the importance of this world justifies. He maintains that overwork slew Pansay, who died under his hands about three years ago. He has, of course, the right to speak authoritatively, and he laughs at my theory that there was a crack in Pansay's head and a little bit of the Dark World came through and pressed him to death. "Pansay went off the handle," says Heatherlegh, "after the stimulus of long leave at Home. He may or he may not have behaved like a blackguard to Mrs. Keith-Wessington. My notion is that the work of the Katabundi Settlement ran him off his legs, and that he took to brooding and making much of an ordinary P. & O. flirtation. He certainly was engaged to Miss Mannering, and she certainly broke off the engagement. Then he took a feverish chill and all that nonsense about ghosts developed. Overwork started his illness, kept it alight, and killed him, poor devil. Write him off to the System that uses one man to do the work of two and a half men."

I do not believe this. I used to sit up with Pansay sometimes when Heatherlegh was called

out to patients and I happened to be within claim. The man would make me most unhappy by describing in a low, even voice the procession that was always passing at the bottom of his bed. He had a sick man's command of language. When he recovered I suggested that he should write out the whole affair from beginning to end, knowing that ink might assist him to ease his mind.

He was in a high fever while he was writing, and the blood-and-thunder Magazine diction he adopted did not calm him. Two months afterwards he was reported fit for duty, but, in spite of the fact that he was urgently needed to help an undermanned Commission stagger through a deficit, he preferred to die; vowing at the last that he was hag-ridden. I got his manuscript before he died, and this is his version of the affair, dated 1885, exactly as he wrote it: —

My doctor tells me that I need rest and change of air. It is not improbable that I shall get both ere long — rest that neither the red-coated messenger nor the mid-day gun can break, and change of air far beyond that which any homeward-bound steamer can give me. In the meantime I am resolved to stay where I am; and, in flat defiance of my doctor's orders, to take all the world into my confidence. You shall learn for yourselves the precise nature of my malady, and shall, too, judge for yourselves whether any man born of

woman on this weary earth was ever so tormented as I.

Speaking now as a condemned criminal might speak ere the drop-bolts are drawn, my story, wild and hideously improbable as it may appear, demands at least attention. That it will ever receive credence I utterly disbelieve. Two months ago I should have scouted as mad or drunk the man who had dared tell me the like. Two months ago I was the happiest man in India. To-day, from Peshawar to the sea, there is no one more wretched. My doctor and I are the only two who know this. His explanation is, that my brain, digestion, and eyesight are all slightly affected; giving rise to my frequent and persistent "delusions." Delusions, indeed! I call him a fool; but he attends me still with the same unwearied smile, the same bland professional manner, the same neatly-trimmed red whiskers, till I begin to suspect that I am an ungrateful, evil-tempered invalid. But you shall judge for yourselves.

Three years ago it was my fortune — my great misfortune — to sail from Gravesend to Bombay, on return from long leave, with one Agnes Keith-Wessington, wife of an officer on the Bombay side. It does not in the least concern you to know what manner of woman she was. Be content with the knowledge that, ere the voyage had ended, both she and I were desperately and unreasoningly

in love with one another. Heaven knows that I can make the admission now without one particle of vanity. In matters of this sort there is always one who gives and another who accepts. From the first day of our ill-omened attachment, I was conscious that Agnes's passion was a stronger, a more dominant, and — if I may use the expression — a purer sentiment than mine. Whether she recognized the fact then, I do not know. Afterwards it was bitterly plain to both of us.

Arrived at Bombay in the spring of the year, we went our respective ways, to meet no more for the next three or four months, when my leave and her love took us both to Simla. There we spent the season together; and there my fire of straw burnt itself out to a pitiful end with the closing year. I attempt no excuse. I make no apology. Mrs. Wessington had given up much for my sake, and was prepared to give up all. From my own lips, in August, 1882, she learnt that I was sick of her presence, tired of her company, and weary of the sound of her voice. Ninety-nine women out of a hundred would have wearied of me as I wearied of them; seventy-five of that number would have promptly avenged themselves by active and obtrusive flirtation with other men. Mrs. Wessington was the hundredth. On her neither my openly-expressed aversion nor the cutting brutalities with which I garnished our interviews had the least effect.

"Jack, darling!" was her one eternal cuckoo cry: "I'm sure it's all a mistake — a hideous mistake; and we'll be good friends again some day. *Please* forgive me, Jack, dear."

I was the offender, and I knew it. That knowledge transformed my pity into passive endurance, and, eventually, into blind hate — the same instinct, I suppose, which prompts a man to savagely stamp on the spider he has but half killed. And with this hate in my bosom the season of 1882 came to an end.

Next year we met again at Simla — she with her monotonous face and timid attempts at reconciliation, and I with loathing of her in every fibre of my frame. Several times I could not avoid meeting her alone; and on each occasion her words were identically the same. Still the unreasoning wail that it was all a "mistake"; and still the hope of eventually "making friends." I might have seen, had I cared to look, that that hope only was keeping her alive. She grew more wan and thin month by month. You will agree with me, at least, that such conduct would have driven any one to despair. It was uncalled for, childish, unwomanly. I maintain that she was much to blame. And again, sometimes, in the black, fever-stricken night-watches, I have begun to think that I might have been a little kinder to her. But that really *is* a "delusion." I could

not have continued pretending to love her when I didn't, could I? It would have been unfair to us both.

Last year we met again — on the same terms as before. The same weary appeals, and the same curt answers from my lips. At least I would make her see how wholly wrong and hopeless were her attempts at resuming the old relationship. As the season wore on, we fell apart — that is to say, she found it difficult to meet me, for I had other and more absorbing interests to attend to. When I think it over quietly in my sick-room, the season of 1884 seems a confused nightmare wherein light and shade were fantastically intermingled — my courtship of little Kitty Mannering; my hopes, doubts, and fears; our long rides together; my trembling avowal of attachment; her reply; and now and again a vision of a white face flitting by in the 'rickshaw with the black-and-white liveries I once watched for so earnestly; the wave of Mrs. Wessington's gloved hand; and, when she met me alone, which was but seldom, the irksome monotony of her appeal. I loved Kitty Mannering; honestly, heartily loved her; and with my love for her grew my hatred for Agnes. In August Kitty and I were engaged. The next day I met those accursed "magpie" *jhampanies* at the back of Jakko, and, moved by some passing sentiment of pity, stopped to

tell Mrs. Wessington everything. She knew it already.

"So I hear you're engaged, Jack dear." Then, without a moment's pause: "I'm sure it's all a mistake — a hideous mistake. We shall be as good friends some day, Jack, as we ever were."

My answer might have made even a man wince. It cut the dying woman before me like the blow of a whip. "Please forgive me, Jack; I didn't mean to make you angry; but it's true, it's true!"

And Mrs. Wessington broke down completely. I turned away and left her to finish her journey in peace, feeling, but only for a moment or two, that I had been an unutterably mean hound. I looked back, and saw that she had turned her 'rickshaw, with the idea, I suppose, of overtaking me.

The scene and its surroundings were photographed on my memory. The rain-swept sky (we were at the end of the wet weather), the sodden, dingy pines, the muddy road, and the black powder-riven cliffs formed a gloomy background against which the black-and-white liveries of the *jhampanies*, the yellow-panelled 'rickshaw, and Mrs. Wessington's down-bowed golden head stood out clearly. She was holding her handkerchief in her left hand and was leaning back exhausted against the 'rickshaw cushions. I turned my horse up a bypath near the Sanjowlie Reservoir and literally ran away. Once I fancied I

heard a faint call of "Jack!" This may have been imagination. I never stopped to verify it. Ten minutes later I came across Kitty on horseback; and, in the delight of a long ride with her, forgot all about the interview.

A week later Mrs. Wessington died, and the inexpressible burden of her existence was removed from my life. I went Plainsward perfectly happy. Before three months were over I had forgotten all about her, except that at times the discovery of some of her old letters reminded me unpleasantly of our bygone relationship. By January I had disinterred what was left of our correspondence from among my scattered belongings and had burnt it. At the beginning of April of this year, 1885, I was at Simla—semi-deserted Simla—once more, and was deep in lover's talks and walks with Kitty. It was decided that we should be married at the end of June. You will understand, therefore, that, loving Kitty as I did, I am not saying too much when I pronounce myself to have been, at that time, the happiest man in India.

Fourteen delightful days passed almost before I noticed their flight. Then, aroused to the sense of what was proper among mortals circumstanced as we were, I pointed out to Kitty that an engagement ring was the outward and visible sign of her dignity as an engaged girl; and that she must forthwith come to Hamilton's to be measured for one.

Up to that moment, I give you my word, we had completely forgotten so trivial a matter. To Hamilton's we accordingly went on the 15th of April, 1885. Remember that — whatever my doctor may say to the contrary — I was then in perfect health, enjoying a well-balanced mind and an *absolutely* tranquil spirit. Kitty and I entered Hamilton's shop together, and there, regardless of the order of affairs, I measured Kitty for the ring in the presence of the amused assistant. The ring was a sapphire with two diamonds. We then rode out down the slope that leads to the Combermere Bridge and Peliti's shop.

While my Waler was cautiously feeling his way over the loose shale, and Kitty was laughing and chattering at my side,— while all Simla, that is to say as much of it as had then come from the Plains, was grouped round the Reading-room and Peliti's verandah,— I was aware that some one, apparently at a vast distance, was calling me by my Christian name. It struck me that I had heard the voice before, but when and where I could not at once determine. In the short space it took to cover the road between the path from Hamilton's shop and the first plank of the Combermere Bridge I had thought over half a dozen people who might have committed such a solecism, and had eventually decided that it must have been some singing in my ears. Immediately opposite Peliti's

shop my eye was arrested by the sight of four *jhampanies* in "magpie" livery, pulling a yellow-panelled, cheap, bazar 'rickshaw. In a moment my mind flew back to the previous season and Mrs. Wessington with a sense of irritation and disgust. Was it not enough that the woman was dead and done with, without her black-and-white servitors reappearing to spoil the day's happiness? Whoever employed them now I thought I would call upon, and ask as a personal favour to change her *jhampanies*' livery. I would hire the men myself, and, if necessary, buy their coats from off their backs. It is impossible to say here what a flood of undesirable memories their presence evoked.

"Kitty," I cried, "there are poor Mrs. Wessington's *jhampanies* turned up again! I wonder who has them now?"

Kitty had known Mrs. Wessington slightly last season, and had always been interested in the sickly woman.

"What? Where?" she asked. "I can't see them anywhere."

Even as she spoke, her horse, swerving from a laden mule, threw himself directly in front of the advancing 'rickshaw. I had scarcely time to utter a word of warning when, to my unutterable horror, horse and rider passed *through* men and carriage as if they had been thin air.

"What's the matter?" cried Kitty; "what

made you call out so foolishly, Jack? If I *am* engaged, I don't want all creation to know about it. There was lots of space between the mule and the verandah; and, if you think I can't ride—There!"

Whereupon wilful Kitty set off, her dainty little head in the air, at a hand-gallop in the direction of the Band-stand; fully expecting, as she herself afterwards told me, that I should follow her. What was the matter? Nothing indeed. Either that I was mad or drunk, or that Simla was haunted with devils. I reined in my impatient cob, and turned round. The 'rickshaw had turned too, and now stood immediately facing me, near the left railing of the Combermere Bridge.

"Jack! Jack, darling!" (There was no mistake about the words this time: they rang through my brain as if they had been shouted in my ear.) "It's some hideous mistake, I'm sure. *Please* forgive me, Jack, and let's be friends again."

The 'rickshaw-hood had fallen back, and inside, as I hope and pray daily for the death I dread by night, sat Mrs. Keith-Wessington, handkerchief in hand, and golden head bowed on her breast.

How long I stared motionless I do not know. Finally, I was aroused by my syce taking the Waler's bridle and asking whether I was ill. From the horrible to the commonplace is but a step. I tumbled off my horse and dashed, half

fainting, into Peliti's for a glass of cherry-brandy. There two or three couples were gathered round the coffee-tables discussing the gossip of the day. Their trivialities were more comforting to me just then than the consolations of religion could have been. I plunged into the midst of the conversation at once; chatted, laughed, and jested with a face (when I caught a glimpse of it in a mirror) as white and drawn as that of a corpse. Three or four men noticed my condition; and, evidently setting it down to the results of over-many pegs, charitably endeavoured to draw me apart from the rest of the loungers. But I refused to be led away. I wanted the company of my kind — as a child rushes into the midst of the dinner-party after a fright in the dark. I must have talked for about ten minutes or so, though it seemed an eternity to me, when I heard Kitty's clear voice outside enquiring for me. In another minute she had entered the shop, prepared to upbraid me for failing so signally in my duties. Something in my face stopped her.

"Why, Jack," she cried, "what *have* you been doing? What *has* happened? Are you ill?" Thus driven into a direct lie, I said that the sun had been a little too much for me. It was close upon five o'clock of a cloudy April afternoon, and the sun had been hidden all day. I saw my mistake as soon as the words were out of my mouth;

attempted to recover it; blundered hopelessly and followed Kitty, in a regal rage, out of doors, amid the smiles of my acquaintances. I made some excuse (I have forgotten what) on the score of my feeling faint; and cantered away to my hotel, leaving Kitty to finish the ride by herself.

In my room I sat down and tried calmly to reason out the matter. Here was I, Theobald Jack Pansay, a well-educated Bengal Civilian in the year of grace 1885, presumably sane, certainly healthy, driven in terror from my sweetheart's side by the apparition of a woman who had been dead and buried eight months ago. These were facts that I could not blink. Nothing was further from my thought than any memory of Mrs. Wessington when Kitty and I left Hamilton's shop. Nothing was more utterly commonplace than the stretch of wall opposite Peliti's. It was broad daylight. The road was full of people, and yet here, look you, in defiance of every law of probability, in direct outrage of Nature's ordinance, there had appeared to me a face from the grave.

Kitty's Arab had gone *through* the 'rickshaw: so that my first hope that some woman marvellously like Mrs. Wessington had hired the carriage and the coolies with their old livery was lost. Again and again I went around this treadmill of thought; and again and again gave up baffled and in despair. The voice was as inexplicable as the appa-

rition. I had originally some wild notion of confiding it all to Kitty; of begging her to marry me at once, and in her arms defying the ghostly occupant of the 'rickshaw. "After all," I argued, "the presence of the 'rickshaw is in itself enough to prove the existence of a spectral illusion. One may see ghosts of men and women, but surely never coolies and carriages. The whole thing is absurd. Fancy the ghost of a hillman!"

Next morning I sent a penitent note to Kitty, imploring her to overlook my strange conduct of the previous afternoon. My Divinity was still very wroth, and a personal apology was necessary. I explained, with a fluency born of night-long pondering over a falsehood, that I had been attacked with a sudden palpitation of the heart — the result of indigestion. This eminently practical solution had its effect: and Kitty and I rode out that afternoon with the shadow of my first lie dividing us.

Nothing would please her save a canter round Jakko. With my nerves still unstrung from the previous night I feebly protested against the notion, suggesting Observatory Hill, Jutogh, the Boileaugunge road—anything rather than the Jakko round. Kitty was angry and a little hurt; so I yielded from fear of provoking further misunderstanding, and we set out together towards Chota Simla. We walked a greater part of the way, and, according to our custom, cantered from

a mile or so below the Convent to the stretch of level road by the Sanjowlie Reservoir. The wretched horses appeared to fly, and my heart beat quicker and quicker as we neared the crest of the ascent. My mind had been full of Mrs. Wessington all the afternoon; and every inch of the Jakko road bore witness to our old-time walks and talks. The boulders were full of it; the pines sang it aloud overhead; the rain-fed torrents giggled and chuckled unseen over the shameful story; and the wind in my ears chanted the iniquity aloud.

As a fitting climax, in the middle of the level men call the Ladies' Mile the Horror was awaiting me. No other 'rickshaw was in sight — only the four black-and-white *jhampanies*, the yellow-panelled carriage, and the golden head of the woman within — all apparently just as I had left them eight months and one fortnight ago! For an instant I fancied that Kitty *must* see what I saw — we were so marvellously sympathetic in all things. Her next words undeceived me — "Not a soul in sight! Come along, Jack, and I'll race you to the Reservoir buildings!" Her wiry little Arab was off like a bird, my Waler following close behind, and in this order we dashed under the cliffs. Half a minute brought us within fifty yards of the 'rickshaw. I pulled my Waler and fell back a little. The 'rickshaw was directly in the middle of the road; and once more the Arab passed through

it, my horse following: "Jack! Jack dear! *Please* forgive me," rang with a wail in my ears, and, after an interval: "It's all a mistake, a hideous mistake!"

I spurred my horse like a man possessed. When I turned my head at the Reservoir works, the black-and-white liveries were still waiting — patiently waiting — under the gray hillside, and the wind brought me a mocking echo of the words I had just heard. Kitty bantered me a good deal on my silence throughout the remainder of the ride. I had been talking up till then wildly and at random. To save my life I could not speak afterwards naturally, and from Sanjowlie to the Church wisely held my tongue.

I was to dine with the Mannerings that night, and had barely time to canter home to dress. On the road to Elysium Hill I overheard two men talking together in the dusk. "It's a curious thing," said one, "how completely all trace of it disappeared. You know my wife was insanely fond of the woman (never could see anything in her myself), and wanted me to pick up her old 'rickshaw and coolies if they were to be got for love or money. Morbid sort of fancy I call it; but I've got to do what the *Memsahib* tells me. Would you believe that the man she hired it from tells me that all four of the men — they were brothers — died of cholera on the way to Hardwar, poor devils; and the 'rickshaw has been broken up

by the man himself. 'Told me he never used a dead *Memsahib's* 'rickshaw. 'Spoilt his luck. Queer notion, wasn't it? Fancy poor little Mrs. Wessington spoiling any one's luck except her own!" I laughed aloud at this point; and my laugh jarred on me as I uttered it. So there *were* ghosts of 'rickshaws after all, and ghostly employments in the other world! How much did Mrs. Wessington give her men? What were their hours? Where did they go?

And for visible answer to my last question I saw the infernal Thing blocking my path in the twilight. The dead travel fast, and by short cuts unknown to ordinary coolies. I laughed aloud a second time and checked my laughter suddenly, for I was afraid I was going mad. Mad to a certain extent I must have been, for I recollect that I reined in my horse at the head of the 'rickshaw, and politely wished Mrs. Wessington "Good-evening." Her answer was one I knew only too well. I listened to the end; and replied that I had heard it all before, but should be delighted if she had anything further to say. Some malignant devil stronger than I must have entered into me that evening, for I have a dim recollection of talking the commonplaces of the day for five minutes to the Thing in front of me.

"Mad as a hatter, poor devil — or drunk. Max, try and get him to come home."

Surely *that* was not Mrs. Wessington's voice! The two men had overheard me speaking to the empty air, and had returned to look after me. They were very kind and considerate, and from their words evidently gathered that I was extremely drunk. I thanked them confusedly and cantered away to my hotel, there changed, and arrived at the Mannerings' ten minutes late. I pleaded the darkness of the night as an excuse; was rebuked by Kitty for my unlover-like tardiness; and sat down.

The conversation had already become general; and under cover of it I was addressing some tender small talk to my sweetheart when I was aware that at the further end of the table a short red-whiskered man was describing, with much broidery, his encounter with a mad unknown that evening.

A few sentences convinced me that he was repeating the incident of half an hour ago. In the middle of the story he looked round for applause, as professional story-tellers do, caught my eye, and straightway collapsed. There was a moment's awkward silence, and the red-whiskered man muttered something to the effect that he had "forgotten the rest," thereby sacrificing a reputation as a good story-teller which he had built up for six seasons past. I blessed him from the bottom of my heart, and — went on with my fish.

In the fullness of time that dinner came to an end; and with genuine regret I tore myself away from Kitty — as certain as I was of my own existence that It would be waiting for me outside the door. The red-whiskered man, who had been introduced to me as Dr. Heatherlegh of Simla, volunteered to bear me company as far as our roads lay together. I accepted his offer with gratitude.

My instinct had not deceived me. It lay in readiness in the Mall, and, in what seemed devilish mockery of our ways, with a lighted headlamp. The red-whiskered man went to the point at once, in a manner that showed he had been thinking over it all dinner-time.

"I say, Pansay, what the deuce was the matter with you this evening on the Elysium Road?" The suddenness of the question wrenched an answer from me before I was aware.

"That!" said I, pointing to It.

"*That* may be either D. T. or Eyes, for aught I know. Now you don't liquor. I saw as much at dinner, so it can't be *D. T.* There's nothing whatever where you're pointing, though you're sweating and trembling with fright, like a scared pony. Therefore, I conclude that it's Eyes. And I ought to understand all about them. Come along home with me. I'm on the Blessington lower road."

To my intense delight, the 'rickshaw, instead of

waiting for us, kept about twenty yards ahead — and this, too, whether we walked, trotted, or cantered. In the course of that long night ride I had told my companion almost as much as I have told you here.

"Well, you've spoilt one of the best tales I've ever laid tongue to," said he, "but I'll forgive you for the sake of what you've gone through. Now come home and do what I tell you; and when I've cured you, young man, let this be a lesson to you to steer clear of women and indigestible food till the day of your death."

The 'rickshaw kept steady in front; and my red-whiskered friend seemed to derive great pleasure from my account of its exact whereabouts.

"Eyes, Pansay — all Eyes, Brain, and Stomach. And the greatest of these three is Stomach. You've too much conceited Brain, too little Stomach, and thoroughly unhealthy Eyes. Get your Stomach straight and the rest follows. And all that's French for a liver pill. I'll take sole medical charge of you from this hour, for you're too interesting a phenomenon to be passed over."

By this time we were deep in the shadow of the Blessington lower road, and the 'rickshaw came to a dead stop under a pine-clad, overhanging shale cliff. Instinctively I halted too, giving my reason. Heatherlegh rapped out an oath.

"Now, if you think I'm going to spend a cold

night on the hillside for the sake of a Stomach-*cum*-Brain-*cum*-Eye illusion — Lord, ha' mercy! What's that?"

There was a muffled report, a blinding smother of dust just in front of us, a crack, the noise of rent boughs, and about ten yards of the cliff-side — pines, undergrowth, and all — slid down into the road below, completely blocking it up. The uprooted trees swayed and tottered for a moment like drunken giants in the gloom, and then fell prone among their fellows with a thunderous crash. Our two horses stood motionless and sweating with fear. As soon as the rattle of falling earth and stone had subsided, my companion muttered: "Man, if we'd gone forward we should have been ten feet deep in our graves by now. 'There are more things in heaven and earth' . . . Come home, Pansay, and thank God. I want a peg badly."

We retraced our way over the Church Ridge, and I arrived at Dr. Heatherlegh's house shortly after midnight.

His attempts towards my cure commenced almost immediately, and for a week I never left his sight. Many a time in the course of that week did I bless the good fortune which had thrown me in contact with Simla's best and kindest doctor. Day by day my spirits grew lighter and more equable. Day by day, too, I became more and more

inclined to fall in with Heatherlegh's "spectral illusion" theory, implicating eyes, brain, and stomach. I wrote to Kitty, telling her that a slight sprain caused by a fall from my horse kept me indoors for a few days; and that I should be recovered before she had time to regret my absence.

Heatherlegh's treatment was simple to a degree. It consisted of liver pills, cold-water baths, and strong exercise, taken in the dusk or at early dawn —for, as he sagely observed: "A man with a sprained ankle doesn't walk a dozen miles a day, and your young woman might be wondering if she saw you."

At the end of the week, after much examination of pupil and pulse, and strict injunctions as to diet and pedestrianism, Heatherlegh dismissed me as brusquely as he had taken charge of me. Here is his parting benediction: "Man, I certify to your mental cure, and that's as much as to say I've cured most of your bodily ailments. Now, get your traps out of this as soon as you can; and be off to make love to Miss Kitty."

I was endeavouring to express my thanks for his kindness. He cut me short.

"Don't think I did this because I like you. I gather that you've behaved like a blackguard all through. But, all the same, you're a phenomenon, and as queer a phenomenon as you are a blackguard. No!"—checking me a second time—

"Not a rupee, please. Go out and see if you can find the eyes-brain-and-stomach business again. I'll give you a lakh for each time you see it."

Half an hour later I was in the Mannerings' drawing-room with Kitty—drunk with the intoxication of present happiness and the foreknowledge that I should never more be troubled with Its hideous presence. Strong in the sense of my new-found security, I proposed a ride at once; and, by preference, a canter round Jakko.

Never had I felt so well, so overladen with vitality and mere animal spirits, as I did on the afternoon of the 30th of April. Kitty was delighted at the change in my appearance, and complimented me on it in her delightfully frank and outspoken manner. We left the Mannerings' house together, laughing and talking, and cantered along the Chota Simla road as of old.

I was in haste to reach the Sanjowlie Reservoir and there make my assurance doubly sure. The horses did their best, but seemed all too slow to my impatient mind. Kitty was astonished at my boisterousness. "Why, Jack!" she cried at last, "you are behaving like a child. What are you doing?"

We were just below the Convent, and from sheer wantonness I was making my Waler plunge and curvet across the road as I tickled it with the loop of my riding-whip.

"Doing?" I answered; "nothing, dear. That's just it. If you'd been doing nothing for a week except lie up, you'd be as riotous as I.

> "Singing and murmuring in your feastful mirth,
> Joying to feel yourself alive;
> Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible Earth,
> Lord of the senses five."

My quotation was hardly out of my lips before we had rounded the corner above the Convent; and a few yards further on could see across to Sanjowlie. In the centre of the level road stood the black-and-white liveries, the yellow-panelled 'rickshaw, and Mrs. Keith-Wessington. I pulled up, looked, rubbed my eyes, and, I believe, must have said something. The next thing I knew was that I was lying face downward on the road, with Kitty kneeling above me in tears.

"Has it gone, child?" I gasped. Kitty only wept more bitterly.

"Has what gone, Jack dear? What does it all mean? There must be a mistake somewhere, Jack. A hideous mistake." Her last words brought me to my feet — mad — raving for the time being.

"Yes, there *is* a mistake somewhere," I repeated, "a hideous mistake. Come and look at It."

I have an indistinct idea that I dragged Kitty by the wrist along the road up to where It stood,

and implored her for pity's sake to speak to It; to tell It that we were betrothed; that neither Death nor Hell could break the tie between us: and Kitty only knows how much more to the same effect. Now and again I appealed passionately to the Terror in the 'rickshaw to bear witness to all I had said, and to release me from a torture that was killing me. As I talked I suppose I must have told Kitty of my old relations with Mrs. Wessington, for I saw her listen intently with white face and blazing eyes.

"Thank you, Mr. Pansay," she said, "that's *quite* enough. *Syce ghora láo.*"

The syces, impassive as Orientals always are, had come up with the recaptured horses; and as Kitty sprang into her saddle I caught hold of her bridle, entreating her to hear me out and forgive. My answer was the cut of her riding-whip across my face from mouth to eye, and a word or two of farewell that even now I cannot write down. So I judged, and judged rightly, that Kitty knew all; and I staggered back to the side of the 'rickshaw. My face was cut and bleeding, and the blow of the riding-whip had raised a livid blue wheal on it. I had no self-respect. Just then, Heatherlegh, who must have been following Kitty and me at a distance, cantered up.

"Doctor," I said, pointing to my face, "here's Miss Mannering's signature to my order of dis-

missal, and — I'll thank you for that lakh as soon as convenient."

Heatherlegh's face, even in my abject misery moved me to laughter.

"I'll stake my professional reputation ——" he began.

"Don't be a fool," I whispered. "I've lost my life's happiness, and you'd better take me home."

As I spoke the 'rickshaw was gone. Then I lost all knowledge of what was passing. The crest of Jakko seemed to heave and roll like the crest of a cloud and fall in upon me.

Seven days later (on the 7th of May, that is to say) I was aware that I was lying in Heatherlegh's room, as weak as a little child. Heatherlegh was watching me intently from behind the papers on his writing-table. His first words were not encouraging; but I was too far spent to be much moved by them.

"Here's Miss Kitty has sent back your letters. You corresponded a good deal, you young people. Here's a packet that looks like a ring, and a cheerful sort of a note from Mannering Papa, which I've taken the liberty of reading and burning. The old gentleman's not pleased with you."

"And Kitty?" I asked dully.

"Rather more drawn than her father, from what she says. By the same token, you must have been

letting out any number of queer reminiscences just before I met you. 'Says that a man who would have behaved to a woman as you did to Mrs. Wessington ought to kill himself out of sheer pity for his kind. She's a hot-headed little virago, your mash. 'Will have it too that you were suffering from *D. T.* when that row on the Jakko road turned up. 'Says she'll die before she ever speaks to you again."

I groaned and turned over on the other side.

"Now you've got your choice, my friend. This engagement has to be broken off; and the Mannerings don't want to be too hard on you. Was it broken through *D. T.* or epileptic fits? Sorry I can't offer you a better exchange unless you'd prefer hereditary insanity. Say the word and I'll tell 'em it's fits. All Simla knows about that scene on the Ladies' Mile. Come! I'll give you five minutes to think over it."

During those five minutes I believe that I explored thoroughly the lowest circles of the Inferno which it is permitted man to tread on earth. And at the same time I myself was watching myself faltering through the dark labyrinths of doubt, misery, and utter despair. I wondered, as Heatherlegh in his chair might have wondered, which dreadful alternative I should adopt. Presently I heard myself answering in a voice that I hardly recognised —

"They're confoundedly particular about morality in these parts. Give 'em fits, Heatherlegh, and my love. Now let me sleep a bit longer."

Then my two selves joined, and it was only I (half-crazed, devil-driven I) that tossed in my bed tracing step by step the history of the past month.

"But I am in Simla," I kept repeating to myself. "I, Jack Pansay, am in Simla, and there are no ghosts here. It's unreasonable of that woman to pretend there are. Why couldn't Agnes have left me alone? I never did her any harm. It might just as well have been me as Agnes. Only I'd never have come back on purpose to kill *her*. Why can't I be left alone — left alone and happy?"

It was high noon when I first awoke: and the sun was low in the sky before I slept — slept as the tortured criminal sleeps on his rack, too worn to feel further pain.

Next day I could not leave my bed. Heatherlegh told me in the morning that he had received an answer from Mr. Mannering, and that, thanks to his (Heatherlegh's) friendly offices, the story of my affliction had travelled through the length and breadth of Simla, where I was on all sides much pitied.

"And that's rather more than you deserve," he concluded pleasantly, "though the Lord knows

you've been going through a pretty severe mill. Never mind; we'll cure you yet, you perverse phenomenon."

I declined firmly to be cured. "You've been much too good to me already, old man," said I; "but I don't think I need trouble you further."

In my heart I knew that nothing Heatherlegh could do would lighten the burden that had been laid upon me.

With that knowledge came also a sense of hopeless, impotent rebellion against the unreasonableness of it all. There were scores of men no better than I whose punishments had at least been reserved for another world; and I felt that it was bitterly, cruelly unfair that I alone should have been singled out for so hideous a fate. This mood would in time give place to another where it seemed that the 'rickshaw and I were the only realities in a world of shadows; that Kitty was a ghost; that Mannering, Heatherlegh, and all the other men and women I knew were all ghosts; and the great, gray hills themselves but vain shadows devised to torture me. From mood to mood I tossed backwards and forwards for seven weary days; my body growing daily stronger and stronger, until the bedroom looking-glass told me that I had returned to every-day life, and was as other men once more. Curiously enough, my face showed no signs of the struggle I had gone

through. It was pale indeed, but as expressionless and commonplace as ever. I had expected some permanent alteration — visible evidence of the disease that was eating me away. I found nothing.

On the 15th of May I left Heatherlegh's house at eleven o'clock in the morning; and the instinct of the bachelor drove me to the Club. There I found that every man knew my story as told by Heatherlegh, and was, in clumsy fashion, abnormally kind and attentive. Nevertheless I recognized that for the rest of my natural life I should be among but not of my fellows; and I envied very bitterly indeed the laughing coolies on the Mall below. I lunched at the Club, and at four o'clock wandered aimlessly down the Mall in the vague hope of meeting Kitty. Close to the Bandstand the black-and-white liveries joined me; and I heard Mrs. Wessington's old appeal at my side. I had been expecting this ever since I came out; and was only surprised at her delay. The phantom 'rickshaw and I went side by side along the Chota Simla road in silence. Close to the bazar, Kitty and a man on horseback overtook and passed us. For any sign she gave, I might have been a dog in the road. She did not even pay me the compliment of quickening her pace; though the rainy afternoon had served for an excuse.

So Kitty and her companion, and I and my ghostly Light-o'-Love, crept round Jakko in couples. The road was streaming with water; the pines dripped like roof-pipes on the rocks below, and the air was full of fine, driving rain. Two or three times I found myself saying to myself almost aloud: "I'm Jack Pansay on leave at Simla — *at Simla!* Every-day, ordinary Simla. I mustn't forget that — I mustn't forget that." Then I would try to recollect some of the gossip I had heard at the Club: the prices of So-and-So's horses — anything, in fact, that related to the work-a-day Anglo-Indian world I knew so well. I even repeated the multiplication-table rapidly to myself, to make quite sure that I was not taking leave of my senses. It gave me much comfort; and must have prevented my hearing Mrs. Wessington for a time.

Once more I wearily climbed the Convent slope and entered the level road. Here Kitty and the man started off at a canter, and I was left alone with Mrs. Wessington. "Agnes," said I, "will you put back your hood and tell me what it all means?" The hood dropped noiselessly, and I was face to face with my dead and buried mistress. She was wearing the dress in which I had last seen her alive; carried the same tiny handkerchief in her right hand, and the same card-case in her left. (A woman eight months dead with a

card-case!) I had to pin myself down to the multiplication-table, and to set both hands on the stone parapet of the road, to assure myself that that at least was real.

"Agnes," I repeated, "for pity's sake tell me what it all means." Mrs. Wessington leaned forward, with that odd, quick turn of the head I used to know so well, and spoke.

If my story had not already so madly overleaped the bounds of all human belief, I should apologise to you now. As I know that no one — no, not even Kitty, for whom it is written as some sort of justification of my conduct — will believe me, I will go on. Mrs. Wessington spoke, and I walked with her from the Sanjowlie road to the turning below the Commander-in-Chief's house as I might walk by the side of any living woman's 'rickshaw, deep in conversation. The second and most tormenting of my moods of sickness had suddenly laid hold upon me, and, like the Prince in Tennyson's poem, "I seemed to move amid a world of ghosts." There had been a garden-party at the Commander-in-Chief's, and we two joined the crowd of homeward-bound folk. As I saw them, it seemed that *they* were the shadows — impalpable fantastic shadows — that divided for Mrs. Wessington's 'rickshaw to pass through. What we said during the course of that weird interview I cannot — indeed, I dare not — tell. Heatherlegh's comment

would have been a short laugh and a remark that I had been "mashing a brain-eye-and-stomach chimera." It was a ghastly and yet in some indefinable way a marvellously dear experience. Could it be possible, I wondered, that I was in this life to woo a second time the woman I had killed by my own neglect and cruelty?

I met Kitty on the homeward road — a shadow among shadows.

If I were to describe all the incidents of the next fortnight in their order, my story would never come to an end, and your patience would be exhausted. Morning after morning and evening after evening the ghostly 'rickshaw and I used to wander through Simla together. Wherever I went, there the four black-and-white liveries followed me and bore me company to and from my hotel. At the Theatre I found them amid the crowd of yelling *jhampanies;* outside the Club verandah, after a long evening of whist; at the Birthday Ball, waiting patiently for my reappearance; and in broad daylight when I went calling. Save that it cast no shadow, the 'rickshaw was in every respect as real to look upon as one of wood and iron. More than once, indeed, I have had to check myself from warning some hard-riding friend against cantering over it. More than once I have walked down the Mall deep in conversation with Mrs. Wessington to the unspeakable amazement of the passers-by.

Before I had been out and about a week I learned that the "fit" theory had been discarded in favour of insanity. However, I made no change in my mode of life. I called, rode, and dined out as freely as ever. I had a passion for the society of my kind which I had never felt before; I hungered to be among the realities of life; and at the same time I felt vaguely unhappy when I had been separated too long from my ghostly companion. It would be almost impossible to describe my varying moods from the 15th of May up to to-day.

The presence of the 'rickshaw filled me by turns with horror, blind fear, a dim sort of pleasure, and utter despair. I dared not leave Simla; and I knew that my stay there was killing me. I knew, moreover, that it was my destiny to die slowly and a little every day. My only anxiety was to get the penance over as quietly as might be. Alternately I hungered for a sight of Kitty and watched her outrageous flirtations with my successor — to speak more accurately, my successors — with amused interest. She was as much out of my life as I was out of hers. By day I wandered with Mrs. Wessington almost content. By night I implored Heaven to let me return to the world as I used to know it. Above all these varying moods lay the sensation of dull, numbing wonder that the seen and the Unseen should mingle so strangely

on this earth to hound one poor soul to its grave.

. . . . . .

August 27.— Heatherlegh has been indefatigable in his attendance on me; and only yesterday told me that I ought to send in an application for sick-leave. An application to escape the company of a phantom! A request that the Government would graciously permit me to get rid of five ghosts and an airy 'rickshaw by going to England! Heatherlegh's proposition moved me to almost hysterical laughter. I told him that I should await the end quietly at Simla; and I am sure that the end is not far off. Believe me that I dread its advent more than any word can say; and I torture myself nightly with a thousand speculations as to the manner of my death.

Shall I die in my bed decently and as an English gentleman should die; or, in one last walk on the Mall, will my soul be wrenched from me to take its place for ever and ever by the side of that ghastly phantasm? Shall I return to my old lost allegiance in the next world, or shall I meet Agnes loathing her and bound to her side through all eternity? Shall we two hover over the scene of our lives till the end of Time? As the day of my death draws nearer, the intense horror that all living flesh feels toward escaped spirits from beyond the grave grows more and more powerful. It is

an awful thing to go down quick among the dead with scarcely one-half of your life completed. It is a thousand times more awful to wait as I do in your midst for I know not what unimaginable terror. Pity me, at least on the score of my "delusion," for I know you will never believe what I have written here. Yet as surely as ever a man was done to death by the Powers of Darkness, I am that man.

In justice, too, pity her. For as surely as ever woman was killed by man, I killed Mrs. Wessington. And the last portion of my punishment is even now upon me.

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

Brother to a Prince and fellow to a beggar if he be found worthy.

The Law, as quoted, lays down a fair conduct of life, and one not easy to follow. I have been fellow to a beggar again and again under circumstances which prevented either of us finding out whether the other was worthy. I have still to be brother to a Prince, though I once came near to kinship with what might have been a veritable King and was promised the reversion of a Kingdom — army, law-courts, revenue and policy all complete. But, to-day, I greatly fear that my King is dead, and if I want a crown I must go hunt it for myself.

The beginning of everything was in a railway train upon the road to Mhow from Ajmir. There had been a Deficit in the Budget, which necessitated travelling, not Second-class, which is only half as dear as First-class, but by Intermediate, which is very awful indeed. There are no cushions in the Intermediate class, and the population are either Intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native,

which for a long night journey is nasty, or Loafer, which is amusing though intoxicated. Intermediates do not buy from refreshment-rooms. They carry their food in bundles and pots, and buy sweets from the native sweetmeat-sellers, and drink the roadside water. That is why in hot weather Intermediates are taken out of the carriages dead, and in all weathers are most properly looked down upon.

My particular Intermediate happened to be empty till I reached Nasirabad, when a big black-browed gentleman in shirt-sleeves entered, and, following the custom of Intermediates, passed the time of day. He was a wanderer and a vagabond like myself, but with an educated taste for whiskey. He told tales of things he had seen and done, of out-of-the-way corners of the Empire into which he had penetrated, and of adventures in which he risked his life for a few days' food.

"If India was filled with men like you and me, not knowing more than the crows where they'd get their next day's rations, it isn't seventy millions of revenue the land would be paying — it's seven hundred millions," said he; and as I looked at his mouth and chin I was disposed to agree with him.

We talked politics — the politics of Loaferdom, that sees things from the underside where the lath and plaster are not smoothed off — and we talked

postal arrangements because my friend wanted to send a telegram back from the next station to Ajmir, the turning-off place from the Bombay to the Mhow line as you travel westward. My friend had no money beyond eight annas which he wanted for dinner, and I had no money at all, owing to the hitch in the Budget before mentioned. Further, I was going into a wilderness where, though I should resume touch with the Treasury, there were no telegraph offices. I was, therefore, unable to help him in any way.

"We might threaten a Station-master, and make him send a wire on tick," said my friend, "but that'd mean enquiries for you and for me, and *I*'ve got my hands full these days. Did you say you were travelling back along this line within any days?"

"Within ten," I said.

"Can't you make it eight?" said he. "Mine is rather urgent business."

"I can send your telegram within ten days if that will serve you," I said.

"I couldn't trust the wire to fetch him now I think of it. It's this way. He leaves Delhi on the 23d for Bombay. That means he'll be running through Ajmir about the night of the 23d."

"But I'm going into the Indian Desert," I explained.

"Well *and* good," said he. "You'll be chang-

ing at Marwar Junction to get into Jodhpore territory — you must do that — and he'll be coming through Marwar Junction in the early morning of the 24th by the Bombay Mail. Can you be at Marwar Junction on that time? 'Twon't be inconveniencing you because I know that there's precious few pickings to be got out of these Central India States — even though you pretend to be correspondent of the 'Backwoodsman.'"

"Have you ever tried that trick?" I asked.

"Again and again, but the Residents find you out, and then you get escorted to the Border before you've time to get your knife into them. But about my friend here. I *must* give him a word o' mouth to tell him what's come to me, or else he won't know where to go. I would take it more than kind of you if you was to come out of Central India in time to catch him at Marwar Junction, and say to him: 'He has gone South for the week.' He'll know what that means. He's a big man with a red beard, and a great swell he is. You'll find him sleeping like a gentleman with all his luggage round him in a Second-class apartment. But don't you be afraid. Slip down the window and say: 'He has gone South for the week,' and he'll tumble. It's only cutting your time of stay in those parts by two days. I ask you as a stranger — going to the West," he said with emphasis.

"Where have *you* come from?" said I.

"From the East," said he, "and I am hoping that you will give him the message on the Square — for the sake of my Mother as well as your own."

Englishmen are not usually softened by appeals to the memory of their mothers; but for certain reasons, which will be fully apparent, I saw fit to agree.

"It's more than a little matter," said he, "and that's why I asked you to do it — and now I know that I can depend on you doing it. A Second-class carriage at Marwar Junction, and a red-haired man asleep in it. You'll be sure to remember. I get out at the next station, and I must hold on there till he comes or sends me what I want."

"I'll give the message if I catch him," I said, "and for the sake of your Mother as well as mine I'll give you a word of advice. Don't try to run the Central India States just now as the correspondent of the 'Backwoodsman.' There's a real one knocking about here, and it might lead to trouble."

"Thank you," said he simply, "and when will the swine be gone? I can't starve because he's ruining my work. I wanted to get hold of the Degumber Rajah down here about his father's widow, and give him a jump."

"What did he do to his father's widow, then?"

"Filled her up with red pepper and slippered

her to death as she hung from a beam. I found that out myself, and I'm the only man that would dare going into the State to get hush-money for it. They'll try to poison me, same as they did in Chortumna when I went on the loot there. But you'll give the man at Marwar Junction my message?"

He got out at a little roadside station, and I reflected. I had heard, more than once, of men personating correspondents of newspapers and bleeding small Native States with threats of exposure, but I had never met any of the caste before. They lead a hard life, and generally die with great suddenness. The Native States have a wholesome horror of English newspapers, which may throw light on their peculiar methods of government, and do their best to choke correspondents with champagne, or drive them out of their mind with four-in-hand barouches. They do not understand that nobody cares a straw for the internal administration of Native States so long as oppression and crime are kept within decent limits, and the ruler is not drugged, drunk, or diseased from one end of the year to the other. They are the dark places of the earth, full of unimaginable cruelty, touching the Railway and the Telegraph on one side, and, on the other, the days of Harun-al-Raschid. When I left the train I did business with divers Kings, and in eight

days passed through many changes of life. Sometimes I wore dress-clothes and consorted with Princes and Politicals, drinking from crystal and eating from silver. Sometimes I lay out upon the ground and devoured what I could get, from a plate made of leaves, and drank the running water, and slept under the same rug as my servant. It was all in the day's work.

Then I headed for the Great Indian Desert upon the proper date, as I had promised, and the night Mail set me down at Marwar Junction, where a funny little, happy-go-lucky, native-managed railway runs to Jodhpore. The Bombay Mail from Delhi makes a short halt at Marwar. She arrived as I got in, and I had just time to hurry to her platform and go down the carriages. There was only one Second-class on the train. I slipped the window and looked down upon a flaming red beard, half covered by a railway rug. That was my man, fast asleep, and I dug him gently in the ribs. He woke with a grunt, and I saw his face in the light of the lamps. It was a great and shining face.

"Tickets again?" said he.

"No," said I. "I am to tell you that he is gone South for the week. He has gone South for the week!"

The train had begun to move out. The red man rubbed his eyes. "He has gone South for

the week," he repeated. "Now that's just like his impidence. Did he say that I was to give you anything? 'Cause I won't."

"He didn't," I said, and dropped away, and watched the red lights die out in the dark. It was horribly cold because the wind was blowing off the sands. I climbed into my own train—not an Intermediate carriage this time—and went to sleep.

If the man with the beard had given me a rupee I should have kept it as a memento of a rather curious affair. But the consciousness of having done my duty was my only reward.

Later on I reflected that two gentlemen like my friends could not do any good if they foregathered and personated correspondents of newspapers, and might, if they blackmailed one of the little rat-trap states of Central India or Southern Rajputana, get themselves into serious difficulties. I therefore took some trouble to describe them as accurately as I could remember to people who would be interested in deporting them: and succeeded, so I was later informed, in having them headed back from the Degumber borders.

Then I became respectable, and returned to an Office where there were no Kings and no incidents outside the daily manufacture of a newspaper. A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person, to the prejudice of discipline.

Zenana-mission ladies arrive, and beg that the Editor will instantly abandon all his duties to describe a Christian prize-giving in a back slum of a perfectly inaccessible village; Colonels who have been overpassed for command sit down and sketch the outline of a series of ten, twelve, or twenty-four leading articles on Seniority *versus* Selection; missionaries wish to know why they have not been permitted to escape from their regular vehicles of abuse and swear at a brother-missionary under special patronage of the editorial We; stranded theatrical companies troop up to explain that they cannot pay for their advertisements, but on their return from New Zealand or Tahiti will do so with interest; inventors of patent punkah-pulling machines, carriage couplings and unbreakable swords and axle-trees call with specifications in their pockets and hours at their disposal; tea-companies enter and elaborate their prospectuses with the office pens; secretaries of ball-committees clamour to have the glories of their last dance more fully described; strange ladies rustle in and say: "I want a hundred lady's cards printed *at once*, please," which is manifestly part of an Editor's duty; and every dissolute ruffian that ever tramped the Grand Trunk Road makes it his business to ask for employment as a proof-reader. And, all the time, the telephone-bell is ringing madly, and Kings are being killed on

the Continent, and Empires are saying—"You're another," and Mr. Gladstone is calling down brimstone upon the British Dominions, and the little black copy-boys are whining, "*kaa-pi chay-ha-yeh*" (copy wanted) like tired bees, and most of the paper is as blank as Modred's shield.

But that is the amusing part of the year. There are six other months when none ever come to call, and the thermometer walks inch by inch up to the top of the glass, and the office is darkened to just above reading-light, and the press-machines are red-hot of touch, and nobody writes anything but accounts of amusements in the Hill-stations or obituary notices. Then the telephone becomes a tinkling terror, because it tells you of the sudden deaths of men and women that you knew intimately, and the prickly-heat covers you with a garment, and you sit down and write: "A slight increase of sickness is reported from the Khuda Janta Khan District. The outbreak is purely sporadic in its nature, and, thanks to the energetic efforts of the District authorities, is now almost at an end. It is, however, with deep regret we record the death," etc.

Then the sickness really breaks out, and the less recording and reporting the better for the peace of the subscribers. But the Empires and the Kings continue to divert themselves as selfishly as before, and the Foreman thinks that a daily

paper really ought to come out once in twenty-four hours, and all the people at the Hill-stations in the middle of their amusements say: "Good gracious! Why can't the paper be sparkling? I'm sure there's plenty going on up here."

That is the dark half of the moon, and, as the advertisements say, "must be experienced to be appreciated."

It was in that season, and a remarkably evil season, that the paper began running the last issue of the week on Saturday night, which is to say Sunday morning, after the custom of a London paper. This was a great convenience, for immediately after the paper was put to bed, the dawn would lower the thermometer from 96° to almost 84° for half an hour, and in that chill—you have no idea how cold is 84° on the grass until you begin to pray for it—a very tired man could get off to sleep ere the heat roused him.

One Saturday night it was my pleasant duty to put the paper to bed alone. A King or courtier or a courtesan or a Community was going to die or get a new Constitution, or do something that was important on the other side of the world, and the paper was to be held open till the latest possible minute in order to catch the telegram.

It was a pitchy-black night, as stifling as a June night can be, and the *loo*, the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry

trees and pretending that the rain was on its heels. Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with the flop of a frog, but all our weary world knew that was only pretence. It was a shade cooler in the press-room than the office, so I sat there, while the type ticked and clicked, and the night-jars hooted at the windows, and the all but naked compositors wiped the sweat from their foreheads, and called for water. The thing that was keeping us back, whatever it was, would not come off, though the *loo* dropped and the last type was set, and the whole round earth stood still in the choking heat, with its finger on its lip, to wait the event. I drowsed, and wondered whether the telegraph was a blessing, and whether this dying man, or struggling people, might be aware of the inconvenience the delay was causing. There was no special reason beyond the heat and worry to make tension, but, as the clock-hands crept up to three o'clock and the machines spun their fly-wheels two and three times to see that all was in order, before I said the word that would set them off, I could have shrieked aloud.

Then the roar and rattle of the wheels shivered the quiet into little bits. I rose to go away, but two men in white clothes stood in front of me. The first one said: "It's him!" The second said: "So it is!" And they both laughed almost as loudly as the machinery roared, and mopped their

foreheads. "We seed there was a light burning across the road, and we were sleeping in that ditch there for coolness, and I said to my friend here, 'The office is open. Let's come along and speak to him as turned us back from the Degumber State,'" said the smaller of the two. He was the man I had met in the Mhow train, and his fellow was the red-bearded man of Marwar Junction. There was no mistaking the eyebrows of the one or the beard of the other.

I was not pleased, because I wished to go to sleep, not to squabble with loafers. "What do you want?" I asked.

"Half an hour's talk with you, cool and comfortable, in the office," said the red-bearded man. "We'd *like* some drink — the Contrack doesn't begin yet, Peachey, so you needn't look — but what we really want is advice. We don't want money. We ask you as a favour, because we found out you did us a bad turn about Degumber State."

I led from the press-room to the stifling office with the maps on the walls, and the red-haired man rubbed his hands. "That's something like," said he. "This was the proper shop to come to. Now, Sir, let me introduce to you Brother Peachey Carnehan, that's him, and Brother Daniel Dravot, that is *me*, and the less said about our professions the better, for we have been most things

in our time. Soldier, sailor, compositor, photographer, proof-reader, street-preacher, and correspondents of the 'Backwoodsman' when we thought the paper wanted one. Carnehan is sober, and so am I. Look at us first, and see that's sure. It will save you cutting into my talk. We'll take one of your cigars apiece, and you shall see us light up."

I watched the test. The men were absolutely sober, so I gave them each a tepid whiskey and soda.

"Well *and* good," said Carnehan of the eyebrows, wiping the froth from his moustache. "Let me talk now, Dan. We have been all over India, mostly on foot. We have been boiler-fitters, engine-drivers, petty contractors, and all that, and we have decided that India isn't big enough for such as us."

They certainly were too big for the office. Dravot's beard seemed to fill half the room and Carnehan's shoulders the other half, as they sat on the big table. Carnehan continued: "The country isn't half worked out because they that governs it won't let you touch it. They spend all their blessed time in governing it, and you can't lift a spade, nor chip a rock, nor look for oil, nor anything like that without all the Government saying — 'Leave it alone, and let us govern.' Therefore, such *as* it is, we will let it alone, and go away to some other

place where a man isn't crowded and can come to his own. We are not little men, and there is nothing that we are afraid of except Drink, and we have signed a Contrack on that. *Therefore*, we are going away to be Kings."

"Kings in our own right," muttered Dravot.

"Yes, of course," I said. "You've been tramping in the sun, and it's a very warm night, and hadn't you better sleep over the notion? Come to-morrow."

"Neither drunk nor sunstruck," said Dravot. "We have slept over the notion half a year, and require to see Books and Atlases, and we have decided that there is only one place now in the world that two strong men can Sar-a-*whack*. They call it Kafiristan. By my reckoning it's the top right-hand corner of Afghanistan, not more than three hundred miles from Peshawar. They have two-and-thirty heathen idols there, and we'll be the thirty-third and fourth. It's a mountaineous country, and the women of those parts are very beautiful."

"But that is provided against in the Contrack," said Carnehan. "Neither Woman nor Liqu-or, Daniel."

"And that's all we know, except that no one has gone there, and they fight, and in any place where they fight a man who knows how to drill men can always be a King. We shall go to those

parts and say to any King we find — 'D'you want to vanquish your foes?' and we will show him how to drill men; for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that King and seize his Throne and establish a Dy-nasty."

"You'll be cut to pieces before you're fifty miles across the Border," I said. "You have to travel through Afghanistan to get to that country. It's one mass of mountains and peaks and glaciers, and no Englishman has been through it. The people are utter brutes, and even if you reached them you couldn't do anything."

"That's more like," said Carnehan. "If you could think us a little more mad we would be more pleased. We have come to you to know about this country, to read a book about it, and to be shown maps. We want you to tell us that we are fools and to show us your books." He turned to the book-cases.

"Are you at all in earnest?" I said.

"A little," said Dravot sweetly. "As big a map as you have got, even if it's all blank where Kafiristan is, and any books you've got. We can read, though we aren't very educated."

I uncased the big thirty-two-miles-to-the-inch map of India, and two smaller Frontier maps, hauled down volume INF–KAN of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," and the men consulted them.

"See here!" said Dravot, his thumb on the map. "Up to Jagdallak, Peachey and me know the road. We was there with Roberts' Army. We'll have to turn off to the right at Jagdallak through Laghmann territory. Then we get among the hills — fourteen thousand feet — fifteen thousand — it will be cold work there, but it don't look very far on the map."

I handed him Wood on the "Sources of the Oxus." Carnehan was deep in the "Encyclopædia."

"They're a mixed lot," said Dravot reflectively; "and it won't help us to know the names of their tribes. The more tribes the more they'll fight, and the better for us. From Jagdallak to Ashang. H'mm!"

"But all the information about the country is as sketchy and inaccurate as can be," I protested. "No one knows anything about it really. Here's the file of the 'United Services' Institute.' Read what Bellew says."

"Blow Bellew!" said Carnehan. "Dan, they're a stinkin' lot of heathens, but this book here says they think they're related to us English."

I smoked while the men pored over "Raverty," "Wood," the maps, and the "Encyclopædia."

"There is no use your waiting," said Dravot politely. "It's about four o'clock now. We'll go before six o'clock if you want to sleep, and

we won't steal any of the papers. Don't you sit up. We're two harmless lunatics, and if you come to-morrow evening down to the Serai we'll say good-bye to you."

"You *are* two fools," I answered. "You'll be turned back at the Frontier or cut up the minute you set foot in Afghanistan. Do you want any money or a recommendation down-country? I can help you to the chance of work next week."

"Next week we shall be hard at work ourselves, thank you," said Dravot. "It isn't so easy being a King as it looks. When we've got our Kingdom in going order we'll let you know, and you can come up and help us to govern it."

"Would two lunatics make a Contrack like that?" said Carnehan, with subdued pride, showing me a greasy half-sheet of notepaper on which was written the following. I copied it, then and there, as a curiosity—

This Contract between me and you persuing witnesseth in the name of God—Amen and so forth.

(*One*) *That me and you will settle this matter together;* i. e., *to be Kings of Kafiristan.*

(*Two*) *That you and me will not, while this matter is being settled, look at any Liquor, nor any Woman black, white, or brown, so as to get mixed up with one or the other harmful.*

(*Three*) *That we conduct ourselves with Dignity and Discretion, and if one of us gets into trouble the other will stay by him.*

Signed by you and me this day.

Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan.

Daniel Dravot.

Both Gentlemen at Large.

"There was no need for the last article," said Carnehan, blushing modestly; "but it looks regular. Now you know the sort of men that loafers are—we *are* loafers, Dan, until we get out of India—and *do* you think that we would sign a Contrack like that unless we was in earnest? We have kept away from the two things that make life worth having."

"You won't enjoy your lives much longer if you are going to try this idiotic adventure. Don't set the office on fire," I said, "and go away before nine o'clock."

I left them still poring over the maps and making notes on the back of the "Contrack." "Be sure to come down to the Serai to-morrow," were their parting words.

The Kumharsen Serai is the great four-square sink of humanity where the strings of camels and horses from the North load and unload. All the nationalities of Central Asia may be found there, and most of the folk of India proper. Balkh and

Bokhara there meet Bengal and Bombay, and try to draw eye-teeth. You can buy ponies, turquoises, Persian pussy-cats, saddle-bags, fat-tailed sheep and musk in the Kumharsen Serai, and get many strange things for nothing. In the afternoon I went down to see whether my friends intended to keep their word or were lying there drunk.

A priest attired in fragments of ribbons and rags stalked up to me, gravely twisting a child's paper whirligig. Behind him was his servant bending under the load of a crate of mud toys. The two were loading up two camels, and the inhabitants of the Serai watched them with shrieks of laughter.

"The priest is mad," said a horse-dealer to me. "He is going up to Kabul to sell toys to the Amir. He will either be raised to honour or have his head cut off. He came in here this morning and has been behaving madly ever since."

"The witless are under the protection of God," stammered a flat-cheeked Usbeg in broken Hindi. "They foretell future events."

"Would they could have foretold that my caravan would have been cut up by the Shinwaris almost within shadow of the Pass!" grunted the Eusufzai agent of a Rajputana trading-house whose goods had been diverted into the hands of other robbers just across the Border, and whose misfortunes were the laughing-stock of the bazar. "Ohé, priest, whence come you and whither do you go?"

"From Roum have I come," shouted the priest, waving his whirligig; "from Roum, blown by the breath of a hundred devils across the sea! O thieves, robbers, liars, the blessing of Pir Khan on pigs, dogs, and perjurers! Who will take the Protected of God to the North to sell charms that are never still to the Amir? The camels shall not gall, the sons shall not fall sick, and the wives shall remain faithful while they are away, of the men who give me place in their caravan. Who will assist me to slipper the King of the Roos with a golden slipper with a silver heel? The protection of Pir Khan be upon his labours!" He spread out the skirts of his gaberdine and pirouetted between the lines of tethered horses.

"There starts a caravan from Peshawar to Kabul in twenty days, *Huzrut*," said the Eusufzai trader. "My camels go therewith. Do thou also go and bring us good luck."

"I will go even now!" shouted the priest. "I will depart upon my winged camels, and be at Peshawar in a day! Ho! Hazar Mir Khan," he yelled to his servant, "drive out the camels, but let me first mount my own."

He leaped on the back of his beast as it knelt, and, turning round to me, cried: "Come thou also, Sahib, a little along the road, and I will sell thee a charm — an amulet that shall make thee King of Kafiristan."

Then the light broke upon me, and I followed

the two camels out of the Serai till we reached open road and the priest halted.

"What d'you think o' that?" said he in English. "Carnehan can't talk their patter, so I've made him my servant. He makes a handsome servant. 'Tisn't for nothing that I've been knocking about the country for fourteen years. Didn't I do that talk neat? We'll hitch on to a caravan at Peshawar till we get to Jagdallak, and then we'll see if we can get donkeys for our camels, and strike into Kafiristan. Whirligigs for the Amir, O Lor! Put your hand under the camel-bags and tell me what you feel."

I felt the butt of a Martini, and another and another.

"Twenty of 'em," said Dravot placidly. "Twenty of 'em and ammunition to correspond, under the whirligigs and the mud dolls."

"Heaven help you if you are caught with those things!" I said. "A Martini is worth her weight in silver among the Pathans."

"Fifteen hundred rupees of capital — every rupee we could beg, borrow, or steal — are invested on these two camels," said Dravot. "We won't get caught. We're going through the Khaiber with a regular caravan. Who'd touch a poor mad priest?"

"Have you got everything you want?" I asked, overcome with astonishment.

"Not yet, but we shall soon. Give us a memento of your kindness, *Brother*. You did me a service yesterday, and that time in Marwar. Half my Kingdom shall you have, as the saying is." I slipped a small charm compass from my watch-chain and handed it up to the priest.

"Good-bye," said Dravot, giving me his hand cautiously. "It's the last time we'll shake hands with an Englishman these many days. Shake hands with him, Carnehan," he cried, as the second camel passed me.

Carnehan leaned down and shook hands. Then the camels passed away along the dusty road, and I was left alone to wonder. My eye could detect no failure in the disguises. The scene in the Serai proved that they were complete to the native mind. There was just the chance, therefore, that Carnehan and Dravot would be able to wander through Afghanistan without detection. But, beyond, they would find death — certain and awful death.

Ten days later a native correspondent, giving me the news of the day from Peshawar, wound up his letter with: "There has been much laughter here on account of a certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell petty gauds and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes as great charms to H. H. the Amir of Bokhara. He passed through Peshawar and associated himself

to the Second Summer caravan that goes to Kabul. The merchants are pleased because through superstition they imagine that such mad fellows bring good fortune."

The two, then, were beyond the Border. I would have prayed for them, but, that night, a real King died in Europe, and demanded an obituary notice.

. . . . . .

The wheel of the world swings through the same phases again and again. Summer passed and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper continued, and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night-issue, and a strained waiting for something to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. A few great men had died in the past two years, the machines worked with more clatter, and some of the trees in the Office garden were a few feet taller. But that was all the difference.

I passed over to the press-room, and went through just such a scene as I have already described. The nervous tension was stronger than it had been two years before, and I felt the heat more acutely. At three o'clock I cried, "Print off," and turned to go, when there crept to my chair what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders,

and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear. I could hardly see whether he walked or crawled — this rag-wrapped, whining cripple who addressed me by name, crying that he was come back. "Can you give me a drink?" he whimpered. "For the Lord's sake, give me a drink!"

I went back to the office, the man following with groans of pain, and I turned up the lamp.

"Don't you know me?" he gasped, dropping into a chair, and he turned his drawn face, surmounted by a shock of gray hair, to the light.

I looked at him intently. Once before had I seen eyebrows that met over the nose in an inch-broad black band, but for the life of me I could not tell where.

"I don't know you," I said, handing him the whiskey. "What can I do for you?"

He took a gulp of the spirit raw, and shivered in spite of the suffocating heat.

"I've come back," he repeated; "and I was the King of Kafiristan — me and Dravot — crowned Kings we was! In this office we settled it — you setting there and giving us the books. I am Peachey — Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan, and you've been setting here ever since — O Lord!"

I was more than a little astonished, and expressed my feelings accordingly.

"It's true," said Carnehan, with a dry cackle,

nursing his feet, which were wrapped in rags. "True as gospel. Kings we were, with crowns upon our heads — me and Dravot — poor Dan — oh, poor, poor Dan, that would never take advice, not though I begged of him!"

"Take the whiskey," I said, "and take your own time. Tell me all you can recollect of everything from beginning to end. You got across the border on your camels. Dravot dressed as a mad priest and you his servant. Do you remember that?"

"I ain't mad — yet, but I shall be that way soon. Of course I remember. Keep looking at me, or maybe my words will go all to pieces. Keep looking at me in my eyes, and don't say anything."

I leaned forward and looked into his face as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon the back was a ragged, red, diamond-shaped scar.

"No, don't look there. Look at *me*," said Carnehan. "That comes afterwards, but for the Lord's sake don't distrack me! We left with that caravan, me and Dravot playing all sorts of antics to amuse the people we were with. Dravot used to make us laugh in the evenings when all the people was cooking their dinners — cooking their dinners, and . . . what did they do then? They lit little fires with sparks that went into Dravot's beard, and we

all laughed—fit to die. Little red fires they was, going into Dravot's big red beard—so funny." His eyes left mine, and he smiled foolishly.

"You went as far as Jagdallak with that caravan," I said at a venture, "after you had lit those fires. To Jagdallak, where you turned off to try to get into Kafiristan."

"No, we didn't neither. What are you talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak, because we heard the roads was good. But they wasn't good enough for our two camels—mine and Dravot's. When we left the caravan, Dravot took off all his clothes and mine too, and said we would be heathen, because the Kafirs didn't allow Mohammedans to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt and between, and such a sight as Daniel Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see again. He burned half his beard, and slung a sheep-skin over his shoulder, and shaved his head into patterns. He shaved mine, too, and made me wear outrageous things to look like a heathen. That was in a most mountaineous country, and our camels couldn't go along any more because of the mountains. They were tall and black, and coming home I saw them fight like wild goats—there are lots of goats in Kafiristan. And these mountains, they never keep still, no more than the goats. Always fighting they are, and don't let you sleep at night."

"Take some more whiskey," I said very slowly.

"What did you and Daniel Dravot do when the camels could go no further because of the rough roads that led into Kafiristan?"

"What did which do? There was a party called Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan that was with Dravot. Shall I tell you about him? He died out there in the cold. Slap from the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirligig that you can sell to the Amir. No; they was two for three ha'pence, those whirligigs, or I am much mistaken and woeful sore . . . And then these camels were no use, and Peachey said to Dravot — 'For the Lord's sake let's get out of this before our heads are chopped off,' and with that they killed the camels all among the mountains, not having anything in particular to eat, but first they took off the boxes with the guns and the ammunition, till two men came along driving four mules. Dravot up and dances in front of them, singing — 'Sell me four mules.' Says the first man — 'If you are rich enough to buy, you are rich enough to rob;' but before ever he could put his hand to his knife, Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and the other party runs away. So Carnehan loaded the mules with the rifles that was taken off the camels, and together we starts forward into those bitter cold mountaineous parts, and never a road broader than the back of your hand."

He paused for a moment, while I asked him if he could remember the nature of the country through which he had journeyed.

"I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn't as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died. The country was mountaineous and the mules were most contrary, and the inhabitants was dispersed and solitary. They went up and up, and down and down, and that other party, Carnehan, was imploring of Dravot not to sing and whistle so loud, for fear of bringing down the tremenjus avalanches. But Dravot says that if a King couldn't sing it wasn't worth being King, and whacked the mules over the rump, and never took no heed for ten cold days. We came to a big level valley all among the mountains, and the mules were near dead, so we killed them, not having anything in special for them or us to eat. We sat upon the boxes, and played odd and even with the cartridges that was jolted out.

"Then ten men with bows and arrows ran down that valley, chasing twenty men with bows and arrows, and the row was tremenjus. They was fair men—fairer than you or me—with yellow hair and remarkable well built. Says Dravot, unpacking the guns—'This is the beginning of the business. We'll fight for the ten men,' and with that he fires two rifles at the twenty men,

and drops one of them at two hundred yards from the rock where he was sitting. The other men began to run, but Carnehan and Dravot sits on the boxes picking them off at all ranges, up and down the valley. Then we goes up to the ten men that had run across the snow too, and they fires a footy little arrow at us. Dravot he shoots above their heads, and they all falls down flat. Then he walks over them and kicks them, and then he lifts them up and shakes hands all round to make them friendly like. He calls them and gives them the boxes to carry, and waves his hand for all the world as though he was King already. They takes the boxes and him across the valley and up the hill into a pine wood on the top, where there was half a dozen big stone idols. Dravot he goes to the biggest—a fellow they call Imbra—and lays a rifle and a cartridge at his feet, rubbing his nose respectful with his own nose, patting him on the head, and saluting in front of it. He turns round to the men and nods his head, and says—'That's all right. I'm in the know too, and all these old jim-jams are my friends.' Then he opens his mouth and points down it, and when the first man brings him food, he says—'No;' and when the second man brings him food he says—'No;' but when one of the old priests and the boss of the village brings him food, he says—'Yes;' very haughty, and eats it slow. That was

how we came to our first village, without any trouble, just as though we had tumbled from the skies. But we tumbled from one of those damned rope-bridges, you see, and—you couldn't expect a man to laugh much after that?"

"Take some more whiskey and go on," I said. "That was the first village you came into. How did you get to be King?"

"I wasn't King," said Carnehan. "Dravot he was the King, and a handsome man he looked with the gold crown on his head, and all. Him and the other party stayed in that village, and every morning Dravot sat by the side of old Imbra, and the people came and worshipped. That was Dravot's order. Then a lot of men came into the valley, and Carnehan and Dravot picks them off with the rifles before they knew where they was, and runs down into the valley and up again the other side and finds another village, same as the first one, and the people all falls down flat on their faces, and Dravot says—'Now what is the trouble between you two villages?' and the people points to a woman, as fair as you or me, that was carried off, and Dravot takes her back to the first village and counts up the dead—eight there was. For each dead man Dravot pours a little milk on the ground and waves his arms like a whirligig, and 'That's all right,' says he. Then he and Carnehan takes the big boss of each village by the arm and

walks them down into the valley, and shows them how to scratch a line with a spear right down the valley, and gives each a sod of turf from both sides of the line. Then all the people comes down and shouts like the devil and all, and Dravot says —'Go and dig the land, and be fruitful and multiply,' which they did, though they didn't understand. Then we asks the names of things in their lingo — bread and water and fire and idols and such, and Dravot leads the priest of each village up to the idol, and says he must sit there and judge the people, and if anything goes wrong he is to be shot.

"Next week they was all turning up the land in the valley as quiet as bees and much prettier, and the priests heard all the complaints and told Dravot in dumb show what it was about. 'That's just the beginning,' says Dravot. 'They think we're Gods.' He and Carnehan picks out twenty good men and shows them how to click off a rifle, and form fours, and advance in line, and they was very pleased to do so, and clever to see the hang of it. Then he takes out his pipe and his baccy-pouch and leaves one at one village, and one at the other, and off we two goes to see what was to be done in the next valley. That was all rock, and there was a little village there, and Carnehan says—'Send 'em to the old valley to plant,' and takes 'em there and gives 'em some land that

wasn't took before. They were a poor lot, and we blooded 'em with a kid before letting 'em into the new Kingdom. That was to impress the people, and then they settled down quiet, and Carnehan went back to Dravot, who had got into another valley, all snow and ice and most mountaineous. There was no people there, and the Army got afraid, so Dravot shoots one of them, and goes on till he finds some people in a village, and the Army explains that unless the people wants to be killed they had better not shoot their little matchlocks; for they had matchlocks. We makes friends with the priest, and I stays there alone with two of the Army, teaching the men how to drill; and a thundering big Chief comes across the snow with kettle-drums and horns twanging, because he heard there was a new God kicking about. Carnehan sights for the brown of the men half a mile across the snow and wings one of them. Then he sends a message to the Chief that, unless he wished to be killed, he must come and shake hands with me and leave his arms behind. The Chief comes alone first, and Carnehan shakes hands with him and whirls his arms about, same as Dravot used, and very much surprised that Chief was, and strokes my eyebrows. Then Carnehan goes alone to the Chief, and asks him in dumb show if he had an enemy he hated. 'I have,' says the Chief. So Carnehan weeds out the pick of his men, and sets

the two of the Army to show them drill, and at the end of two weeks the men can manœuvre about as well as Volunteers. So he marches with the Chief to a great big plain on the top of a mountain, and the Chief's men rushes into a village and takes it; we three Martinis firing into the brown of the enemy. So we took that village too, and and I gives the Chief a rag from my coat and says, 'Occupy till I come;' which was scriptural. By way of a reminder, when me and the Army was eighteen hundred yards away, I drops a bullet near him standing on the snow, and all the people falls flat on their faces. Then I sends a letter to Dravot wherever he be by land or by sea."

At the risk of throwing the creature out of train, I interrupted—"How could you write a letter up yonder?"

"The letter?—Oh!—The letter! Keep looking at me between the eyes, please. It was a string-talk letter, that we'd learned the way of it from a blind beggar in the Punjab."

I remember that there had once come to the office a blind man with a knotted twig and a piece of string which he wound round the twig according to some cipher of his own. He could, after the lapse of days or hours, repeat the sentence which he had reeled up. He had reduced the alphabet to eleven primitive sounds; and he tried to teach me his method, but I could not understand.

"I sent that letter to Dravot," said Carnehan; "and told him to come back because this Kingdom was growing too big for me to handle, and then I struck for the first valley, to see how the priests were working. They called the village we took along with the Chief, Bashkai, and the first village we took, Er-Heb. The priests at Er-Heb was doing all right, but they had a lot of pending cases about land to show me, and some men from another village had been firing arrows at night. I went out and looked for that village, and fired four rounds at it from a thousand yards. That used all the cartridges I cared to spend, and I waited for Dravot, who had been away two or three months, and I kept my people quiet.

"One morning I heard the devil's own noise of drums and horns, and Dan Dravot marches down the hill with his Army and a tail of hundreds of men, and, which was the most amazing, a great gold crown on his head. 'My Gord, Carnehan,' says Daniel, 'this is a tremenjus business, and we've got the whole country as far as it's worth having. I am the son of Alexander by Queen Semiramis, and you're my younger brother and a God too! It's the biggest thing we've ever seen. I've been marching and fighting for six weeks with the Army, and every footy little village for fifty miles has come in rejoiceful; and more than that, I've got the key of the whole show, as you'll see, and

I've got a crown for you! I told 'em to make two of 'em at a place called Shu, where the gold lies in the rock like suet in mutton. Gold I've seen, and turquoise I've kicked out of the cliffs, and there's garnets in the sands of the river, and here's a chunk of amber that a man brought me. Call up all the priests and, here, take your crown.'

"One of the men opens a black hair bag, and I slips the crown on. It was too small and too heavy, but I wore it for the glory. Hammered gold it was — five pound weight, like a hoop of a barrel.

"'Peachey,' says Dravot, 'we don't want to fight no more. The Craft's the trick, so help me!' and he brings forward that same Chief that I left at Bashkai — Billy Fish we called him afterwards, because he was so like Billy Fish that drove the big tank-engine at Mach on the Bolan in the old days. 'Shake hands with him,' says Dravot, and I shook hands and nearly dropped, for Billy Fish gave me the Grip. I said nothing, but tried him with the Fellow Craft Grip. He answers all right, and I tried the Master's Grip, but that was a slip. 'A Fellow Craft he is!' I says to Dan. 'Does he know the word?' — 'He does,' says Dan, 'and all the priests know. It's a miracle! The Chiefs and the priests can work a Fellow Craft Lodge in a way that's very like ours, and they've cut the marks on the rocks, but they don't

know the Third Degree, and they've come to find out. It's Gord's Truth. I've known these long years that the Afghans knew up to the Fellow Craft Degree, but this is a miracle. A God and a Grand-Master of the Craft am I, and a Lodge in the Third Degree I will open, and we'll raise the head priests and the Chiefs of the villages.'

"'It's against all the law,' I says, 'holding a Lodge without warrant from any one; and you know we never held office in any Lodge.'

"'It's a master-stroke o' policy,' says Dravot. 'It means running the country as easy as a four-wheeled bogie on a down grade. We can't stop to enquire now, or they'll turn against us. I've forty Chiefs at my heel, and passed and raised according to their merit they shall be. Billet these men on the villages, and see that we run up a Lodge of some kind. The temple of Imbra will do for the Lodge-room. The women must make aprons as you show them. I'll hold a levee of Chiefs to-night and Lodge to-morrow.'

"I was fair run off my legs, but I wasn't such a fool as not to see what a pull this Craft business gave us. I showed the priests' families how to make aprons of the degrees, but for Dravot's apron the blue border and marks was made of turquoise lumps on white hide, not cloth. We took a great square stone in the temple for the Master's chair, and little stones for the officers'

chairs, and painted the black pavement with white squares, and did what we could to make things regular.

"At the levee which was held that night on the hillside with big bonfires, Dravot gives out that him and me were Gods and sons of Alexander, and Past Grand-Masters in the Craft, and was come to make Kafiristan a country where every man should eat in peace and drink in quiet, and specially obey us. Then the Chiefs come round to shake hands, and they were so hairy and white and fair it was just shaking hands with old friends. We gave them names according as they was like men we had known in India — Billy Fish, Holly Dilworth, Pikky Kergan, that was Bazar-master when I was at Mhow, and so on, and so on.

"*The* most amazing miracles was at Lodge next night. One of the old priests was watching us continuous, and I felt uneasy, for I knew we'd have to fudge the Ritual, and I didn't know what the men knew. The old priest was a stranger come in from beyond the village of Bashkai. The minute Dravot puts on the Master's apron that the girls had made for him, the priest fetches a whoop and a howl, and tries to overturn the stone that Dravot was sitting on. 'It's all up now,' I says. 'That comes of meddling with the Craft without warrant!' Dravot never winked an

eye, not when ten priests took and tilted over the Grand-Master's chair — which was to say the stone of Imbra. The priest begins rubbing the bottom end of it to clear away the black dirt, and presently he shows all the other priests the Master's Mark, same as was on Dravot's apron, cut into the stone. Not even the priests of the temple of Imbra knew it was there. The old chap falls flat on his face at Dravot's feet and kisses 'em. 'Luck again,' says Dravot, across the Lodge to me; 'they say it's the missing Mark that no one could understand the why of. We're more than safe now.' Then he bangs the butt of his gun for a gavel and says: 'By virtue of the authority vested in me by my own right hand and the help of Peachey, I declare myself Grand-Master of all Freemasonry in Kafiristan in this the Mother Lodge o' the country, and King of Kafiristan equally with Peachey!' At that he puts on his crown and I puts on mine — I was doing Senior Warden — and we opens the Lodge in most ample form. It was a amazing miracle! The priests moved in Lodge through the first two degrees almost without telling, as if the memory was coming back to them. After that, Peachey and Dravot raised such as was worthy — high priests and Chiefs of far-off villages. Billy Fish was the first, and I can tell you we scared the soul out of him. It was not in any way according to

Ritual, but it served our turn. We didn't raise more than ten of the biggest men, because we didn't want to make the Degree common. And they was clamouring to be raised.

"'In another six months,' says Dravot, 'we'll hold another Communication, and see how you are working.' Then he asks them about their villages, and learns that they was fighting one against the other, and were sick and tired of it. And when they wasn't doing that they was fighting with the Mohammedans. 'You can fight those when they come into our country,' says Dravot. 'Tell off every tenth man of your tribes for a Frontier guard, and send two hundred at a time to this valley to be drilled. Nobody is going to be shot or speared any more so long as he does well, and I know that you won't cheat me, because you're white people — sons of Alexander — and not like common, black Mohammedans. You are *my* people, and by God,' says he, running off into English at the end — 'I'll make a damned fine Nation of you, or I'll die in the making!'

"I can't tell all we did for the next six months, because Dravot did a lot I couldn't see the hang of, and he learned their lingo in a way I never could. My work was to help the people plough, and now and again go out with some of the Army and see what the other villages were doing, and

make 'em throw rope-bridges across the ravines which cut up the country horrid. Dravot was very kind to me, but when he walked up and down in the pine wood pulling that bloody red beard of his with both fists I knew he was thinking plans I could not advise about, and I just waited for orders.

"But Dravot never showed me disrespect before the people. They were afraid of me and the Army, but they loved Dan. He was the best of friends with the priests and the Chiefs; but any one could come across the hills with a complaint, and Dravot would hear him out fair, and call four priests together and say what was to be done. He used to call in Billy Fish from Bashkai, and Pikky Kergan from Shu, and an old Chief we called Kafuzelum — it was like enough to his real name — and hold councils with 'em when there was any fighting to be done in small villages. That was his Council of War, and the four priests of Bashkai, Shu, Khawak, and Madora was his Privy Council. Between the lot of 'em they sent me, with forty men and twenty rifles, and sixty men carrying turquoises, into the Ghorband country to buy those hand-made Martini rifles, that come out of the Amir's workshops at Kabul, from one of the Amir's Herati regiments that would have sold the very teeth out of their mouths for turquoises.

"I stayed in Ghorband a month, and gave the

Governor there the pick of my baskets for hush-money, and bribed the Colonel of the regiment some more, and, between the two and the tribes-people, we got more than a hundred hand-made Martinis, a hundred good Kohat Jezails that'll throw to six hundred yards, and forty man-loads of very bad ammunition for the rifles. I came back with what I had, and distributed 'em among the men that the Chiefs sent in to me to drill. Dravot was too busy to attend to those things, but the old Army that we first made helped me, and we turned out five hundred men that could drill, and two hundred that knew how to hold arms pretty straight. Even those corkscrewed, hand-made guns was a miracle to them. Dravot talked big about powder-shops and factories, walking up and down in the pine wood when the winter was coming on.

"'I won't make a Nation,' says he; 'I'll make an Empire! These men aren't niggers; they're English! Look at their eyes — look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes, or something like it, and they've grown to be English. I'll take a census in the spring if the priests don't get frightened. There must be a fair two million of 'em in these hills. The villages are full o' little children. Two million people — two hundred and fifty thousand

fighting men — and all English! They only want the rifles and a little drilling. Two hundred and fifty thousand men ready to cut in on Russia's right flank when she tries for India! Peachey, man,' he says, chewing his beard in great hunks, 'we shall be Emperors — Emperors of the Earth! Rajah Brooke will be a suckling to us. I'll treat with the Viceroy on equal terms. I'll ask him to send me twelve picked English — twelve that I know of — to help us govern a bit. There's Mackray, Sergeant-pensioner at Segowli — many's the good dinner he's given me, and his wife a pair of trousers. There's Donkin, the Warder of Tounghoo Jail; there's hundreds that I could lay my hand on if I was in India. The Viceroy shall do it for me; I'll send a man through in the spring for those men, and I'll write for a dispensation from the Grand Lodge for what I've done as Grand-Master. That — and all the Sniders that'll be thrown out when the native troops in India take up the Martini. They'll be worn smooth, but they'll do for fighting in these hills. Twelve English, a hundred thousand Sniders run through the Amir's country in driblets — I'd be content with twenty thousand in one year — and we'd be an Empire. When everything was shipshape, I'd hand over the crown — this crown I'm wearing now — to Queen Victoria on my knees, and she'd say: "Rise up, Sir Daniel Dravot." Oh, it's big!

It's big, I tell you! But there's so much to be done in every place — Bashkai, Khawak, Shu, and everywhere else.'

"'What is it?' I says. 'There are no more men coming in to be drilled this autumn. Look at those fat, black clouds. They're bringing the snow.'

"'It isn't that,' says Daniel, putting his hand very hard on my shoulder; 'and I don't wish to say anything that's against you, for no other living man would have followed me and made me what I am as you have done. You're a first-class Commander-in-Chief, and the people know you; but — it's a big country, and somehow you can't help me, Peachey, in the way I want to be helped.'

"'Go to your blasted priests, then!' I said, and I was sorry when I made that remark, but it did hurt me sore to find Daniel talking so superior when I'd drilled all the men, and done all he told me.

"'Don't let's quarrel, Peachey,' says Daniel, without cursing. 'You're a King too, and the half of this Kingdom is yours; but can't you see, Peachey, we want cleverer men than us now — three or four of 'em, that we can scatter about for our Deputies. It's a hugeous great State, and I can't always tell the right thing to do, and I haven't time for all I want to do, and here's the winter coming on, and all.' He put half his

beard into his mouth, all red like the gold of his crown.

"'I'm sorry, Daniel,' says I. 'I've done all I could. I've drilled the men and shown the people how to stack their oats better; and I've brought in those tinware rifles from Ghorband—but I know what you're driving at. I take it Kings always feel oppressed that way.'

"'There's another thing too,' says Dravot, walking up and down. 'The winter's coming, and these people won't be giving much trouble, and if they do we can't move about. I want a wife.'

"'For Gord's sake leave the women alone!' I says. 'We've both got all the work we can, though I *am* a fool. Remember the Contrack, and keep clear o' women.'

"'The Contrack only lasted till such time as we was Kings; and Kings we have been these months past,' says Dravot, weighing his crown in his hand. 'You go get a wife too, Peachey—a nice, strappin', plump girl that'll keep you warm in the winter. They're prettier than English girls, and we can take the pick of 'em. Boil 'em once or twice in hot water, and they'll come out like chicken and ham.'

"'Don't tempt me!' I says. 'I will not have any dealings with a woman not till we are a dam' side more settled than we are now. I've been doing the work o' two men, and you've been doing

the work o' three. Let's lie off a bit, and see if we can get some better tobacco from Afghan country and run in some good liquor; but no women.'

"'Who's talking o' *women?*' says Dravot. 'I said *wife*—a Queen to breed a King's son for the King. A Queen out of the strongest tribe, that'll make them your blood-brothers, and that'll lie by your side and tell you all the people thinks about you and their own affairs. That's what I want.'

"'Do you remember that Bengali woman I kept at Mogul Serai when I was a plate-layer?' says I. 'A fat lot o' good she was to me. She taught me the lingo and one or two other things; but what happened? She ran away with the Station-Master's servant and half my month's pay. Then she turned up at Dadur Junction in tow of a half-caste, and had the impidence to say I was her husband—all among the drivers in the running-shed too!'

"'We've done with that,' says Dravot; 'these women are whiter than you or me, and a Queen I will have for the winter months.'

"'For the last time o' asking, Dan, do *not*,' I says. 'It'll only bring us harm. The Bible says that Kings ain't to waste their strength on women, 'specially when they've got a new raw Kingdom to work over.'

"'For the last time of answering, I will,' said Dravot, and he went away through the pine-trees

looking like a big red devil, the sun being on his crown and beard and all.

"But getting a wife was not as easy as Dan thought. He put it before the Council, and there was no answer till Billy Fish said that he'd better ask the girls. Dravot damned them all round. 'What's wrong with me?' he shouts, standing by the idol Imbra. 'Am I a dog or am I not enough of a man for your wenches? Haven't I put the shadow of my hand over this country? Who stopped the last Afghan raid?' It was me really, but Dravot was too angry to remember. 'Who bought your guns? Who repaired the bridges? Who's the Grand-Master of the sign cut in the stone?' says he, and he thumped his hand on the block that he used to sit on in Lodge, and at Council, which opened like Lodge always. Billy Fish said nothing, and no more did the others. 'Keep your hair on, Dan,' said I; 'and ask the girls. That's how it's done at Home, and these people are quite English.'

"'The marriage of the King is a matter of State,' says Dan, in a white-hot rage, for he could feel, I hope, that he was going against his better mind. He walked out of the Council-room, and the others sat still, looking at the ground.

"'Billy Fish,' says I to the Chief of Bashkai, 'what's the difficulty here? A straight answer to a true friend.'

"'You know,' says Billy Fish. 'How should a man tell you who knows everything? How can daughters of men marry Gods or Devils? It's not proper.'

"I remembered something like that in the Bible; but if, after seeing us as long as they had, they still believed we were Gods, it wasn't for me to undeceive them.

"'A God can do anything,' says I. 'If the King is fond of a girl he'll not let her die.'

"'She'll have to,' said Billy Fish. 'There are all sorts of Gods and Devils in these mountains, and now and again a girl marries one of them and isn't seen any more. Besides, you two know the Mark cut in the stone. Only the Gods know that. We thought you were men till you showed the sign of the Master.'

"I wished then that we had explained about the loss of the genuine secrets of a Master-Mason at the first go-off; but I said nothing. All that night there was a blowing of horns in a little dark temple half-way down the hill, and I heard a girl crying fit to die. One of the priests told us that she was being prepared to marry the King.

"'I'll have no nonsense of that kind,' says Dan. 'I don't want to interfere with your customs, but I'll take my own wife.'

"'The girl's a little bit afraid,' says the priest.

'She thinks she's going to die, and they are a-heartening of her up down in the temple.'

"'Hearten her very tender, then,' says Dravot, 'or I'll hearten you with the butt of a gun so you'll never want to be heartened again.' He licked his lips, did Dan, and stayed up walking about more than half the night, thinking of the wife that he was going to get in the morning. I wasn't any means comfortable, for I knew that dealings with a woman in foreign parts, though you was a crowned King twenty times over, could not but be risky. I got up very early in the morning while Dravot was asleep, and I saw the priests talking together in whispers, and the Chiefs talking together too, and they looked at me out of the corners of their eyes.

"'What is up, Fish?' I says to the Bashkai man, who was wrapped up in his furs and looking splendid to behold.

"'I can't rightly say,' says he; 'but if you can make the King drop all this nonsense about marriage, you'll be doing him and me and yourself a great service.'

"'That I do believe,' says I. 'But sure, you know, Billy, as well as me, having fought against and for us, that the King and me are nothing more than two of the finest men that God Almighty ever made. Nothing more, I do assure you.'

"'That may be,' says Billy Fish, 'and yet I

should be sorry if it was.' He sinks his head upon his great fur cloak for a minute and thinks. 'King,' says he, 'be you man or God or Devil, I'll stick by you to-day. I have twenty of my men with me, and they will follow me. We'll go to Bashkai until the storm blows over.'

"A little snow had fallen in the night, and everything was white except the greasy fat clouds that blew down and down from the north. Dravot came out with his crown on his head, swinging his arms and stamping his feet, and looking more pleased than Punch.

"'For the last time, drop it, Dan,' says I in a whisper; 'Billy Fish here says that there will be a row.'

"'A row among my people!' says Dravot. 'Not much. Peachey, you're a fool not to get a wife too. Where's the girl?' says he with a voice as loud as the braying of a jackass. 'Call up all the Chiefs and priests, and let the Emperor see if his wife suits him.'

"There was no need to call any one. They were all there leaning on their guns and spears round the clearing in the centre of the pine wood. A lot of priests went down to the little temple to bring up the girl, and the horns blew fit to wake the dead. Billy Fish saunters round and gets as close to Daniel as he could, and behind him stood his twenty men with matchlocks. Not a man of

them under six feet. I was next to Dravot, and behind me was twenty men of the regular Army. Up comes the girl, and a strapping wench she was, covered with silver and turquoises, but white as death, and looking back every minute at the priests.

"'She'll do,' said Dan, looking her over. 'What's to be afraid of, lass? Come and kiss me.' He puts his arm round her. She shuts her eyes, gives a bit of a squeak, and down goes her face in the side of Dan's flaming red beard.

"'The slut's bitten me!' says he, clapping his hand to his neck, and, sure enough, his hand was red with blood. Billy Fish and two of his match-lock-men catches hold of Dan by the shoulders and drags him into the Bashkai lot, while the priests howls in their lingo,—'Neither God nor Devil, but a man!' I was all taken aback, for a priest cut at me in front, and the Army behind began firing into the Bashkai men.

"'God A'mighty!' says Dan. 'What is the meaning o' this?'

"'Come back! Come away!' says Billy Fish. 'Ruin and Mutiny is the matter. We'll break for Bashkai if we can.'

"I tried to give some sort of orders to my men — the men o' the regular Army — but it was no use, so I fired into the brown of 'em with an English Martini and drilled three beggars in a

line. The valley was full of shouting, howling creatures, and every soul was shrieking, 'Not a God nor a Devil, but only a man!' The Bashkai troops stuck to Billy Fish all they were worth, but their matchlocks wasn't half as good as the Kabul breech-loaders, and four of them dropped. Dan was bellowing like a bull, for he was very wrathy; and Billy Fish had a hard job to prevent him running out at the crowd.

"'We can't stand,' says Billy Fish. 'Make a run for it down the valley! The whole place is against us.' The matchlock-men ran, and we went down the valley in spite of Dravot. He was swearing horrible and crying out he was a King. The priests rolled great stones on us, and the regular Army fired hard, and there wasn't more than six men, not counting Dan, Billy Fish, and Me, that came down to the bottom of the valley alive.

"Then they stopped firing, and the horns in the temple blew again. 'Come away — for Gord's sake come away!' says Billy Fish. 'They'll send runners out to all the villages before ever we get to Bashkai. I can protect you there, but I can't do anything now.'

"My own notion is that Dan began to go mad in his head from that hour. He stared up and down like a stuck pig. Then he was all for walking back alone and killing the priests with his

bare hands; which he could have done. 'An Emperor am I,' says Daniel, 'and next year I shall be a Knight of the Queen.'

"'All right, Dan,' says I; 'but come along now while there's time.'

"'It's your fault,' says he, 'for not looking after your Army better. There was mutiny in the midst, and you didn't know — you damned engine-driving, plate-laying, missionary's-pass-hunting hound!' He sat upon a rock and called me every foul name he could lay tongue to. I was too heart-sick to care, though it was all his foolishness that brought the smash.

"'I'm sorry, Dan,' says I, 'but there's no accounting for natives. This business is our Fifty-Seven. Maybe we'll make something out of it yet, when we've got to Bashkai.'

"'Let's get to Bashkai, then,' says Dan, 'and, by God, when I come back here again I'll sweep the valley so there isn't a bug in a blanket left!'

"We walked all that day, and all that night Dan was stumping up and down on the snow, chewing his beard and muttering to himself.

"'There's no hope o' getting clear,' said Billy Fish. 'The priests will have sent runners to the villages to say that you are only men. Why didn't you stick on as Gods till things was more settled? I'm a dead man,' says Billy Fish, and

he throws himself down on the snow and begins to pray to his Gods.

"Next morning we was in a cruel bad country —all up and down, no level ground at all, and no food either. The six Bashkai men looked at Billy Fish hungry-way as if they wanted to ask something, but they said never a word. At noon we came to the top of a flat mountain all covered with snow, and when we climbed up into it, behold, there was an Army in position waiting in the middle!

"'The runners have been very quick,' says Billy Fish, with a little bit of a laugh. 'They are waiting for us.'

"Three or four men began to fire from the enemy's side, and a chance shot took Daniel in the calf of the leg. That brought him to his senses. He looks across the snow at the Army, and sees the rifles that we had brought into the country.

"'We're done for,' says he. 'They are Englishmen, these people,—and it's my blasted nonsense that has brought you to this. Get back, Billy Fish, and take your men away; you've done what you could, and now cut for it. Carnehan,' says he, 'shake hands with me and go along with Billy. Maybe they won't kill you. I'll go and meet 'em alone. It's me that did it. Me, the King!'

"'Go!' says I. 'Go to Hell, Dan. I'm with you here. Billy Fish, you clear out, and we two will meet those folk.'

"'I'm a Chief,' says Billy Fish, quite quiet. 'I stay with you. My men can go.'

"The Bashkai fellows didn't wait for a second word, but ran off; and Dan and Me and Billy Fish walked across to where the drums were drumming and the horns were horning. It was cold — awful cold. I've got that cold in the back of my head now. There's a lump of it there."

The punkah-coolies had gone to sleep. Two kerosene lamps were blazing in the office, and the perspiration poured down my face and splashed on the blotter as I leaned forward. Carnehan was shivering, and I feared that his mind might go. I wiped my face, took a fresh grip of the piteously mangled hands, and said: "What happened after that?"

The momentary shift of my eyes had broken the clear current.

"What was you pleased to say?" whined Carnehan. "They took them without any sound. Not a little whisper all along the snow, not though the King knocked down the first man that set hand on him — not though old Peachey fired his last cartridge into the brown of 'em. Not a single solitary sound did those swines make. They just closed up tight, and I tell you their furs stunk.

There was a man called Billy Fish, a good friend of us all, and they cut his throat, Sir, then and there, like a pig; and the King kicks up the bloody snow and says: 'We've had a dashed fine run for our money. What's coming next?' But Peachey, Peachey Taliaferro, I tell you, Sir, in confidence as betwixt two friends, he lost his head, Sir. No, he didn't neither. The King lost his head, so he did, all along o' one of those cunning rope-bridges. Kindly let me have the paper-cutter, Sir. It tilted this way. They marched him a mile across that snow to a rope-bridge over a ravine with a river at the bottom. You may have seen such. They prodded him behind like an ox. 'Damn your eyes!' says the King. 'D'you suppose I can't die like a gentleman?' He turns to Peachey — Peachey that was crying like a child. 'I've brought you to this, Peachey,' says he. 'Brought you out of your happy life to be killed in Kafiristan, where you was late Commander-in-Chief of the Emperor's forces. Say you forgive me, Peachey.'—'I do,' says Peachey. 'Fully and freely do I forgive you, Dan.'—'Shake hands, Peachey,' says he. 'I'm going now.' Out he goes, looking neither right nor left, and when he was plumb in the middle of those dizzy dancing ropes, 'Cut, you beggars,' he shouts; and they cut, and old Dan fell, turning round and round and round, twenty thousand miles, for he took half

an hour to fall till he struck the water, and I could see his body caught on a rock with the gold crown close beside.

"But do you know what they did to Peachey between two pine-trees? They crucified him, Sir, as Peachey's hands will show. They used wooden pegs for his hands and his feet; and he didn't die. He hung there and screamed, and they took him down next day, and said it was a miracle that he wasn't dead. They took him down — poor old Peachey that hadn't done them any harm — that hadn't done them any ——"

He rocked to and fro and wept bitterly, wiping his eyes with the back of his scarred hands and moaning like a child for some ten minutes.

"They was cruel enough to feed him up in the temple, because they said he was more of a God than old Daniel that was a man. Then they turned him out on the snow, and told him to go home, and Peachey came home in about a year, begging along the roads quite safe; for Daniel Dravot he walked before and said: 'Come along, Peachey. It's a big thing we're doing.' The mountains they danced at night, and the mountains they tried to fall on Peachey's head, but Dan he held up his hand, and Peachey came along bent double. He never let go of Dan's hand, and he never let go of Dan's head. They gave it to him as a present in the temple, to remind him not to come again,

and though the crown was pure gold, and Peachey was starving, never would Peachey sell the same. You knew Dravot, Sir! You knew Right Worshipful Brother Dravot! Look at him now!"

He fumbled in the mass of rags round his bent waist; brought out a black horsehair bag embroidered with silver thread; and shook therefrom on to my table — the dried, withered head of Daniel Dravot! The morning sun that had long been paling the lamps struck the red beard and blind, sunken eyes; struck, too, a heavy circlet of gold studded with raw turquoises, that Carnehan placed tenderly on the battered temples.

"You be'old now," said Carnehan, "the Emperor in his 'abit as he lived — the King of Kafiristan with his crown upon his head. Poor old Daniel that was a monarch once!"

I shuddered, for, in spite of defacements manifold, I recognised the head of the man of Marwar Junction. Carnehan rose to go. I attempted to stop him. He was not fit to walk abroad. "Let me take away the whiskey, and give me a little money," he gasped. "I was a King once. I'll go to the Deputy Commissioner and ask to set in the Poorhouse till I get my health. No, thank you, I can't wait till you get a carriage for me. I've urgent private affairs — in the south — at Marwar."

He shambled out of the office and departed in the direction of the Deputy Commissioner's house.

That day at noon I had occasion to go down the blinding hot Mall, and I saw a crooked man crawling along the white dust of the roadside, his hat in his hand, quavering dolorously after the fashion of street-singers at Home. There was not a soul in sight, and he was out of all possible earshot of the houses. And he sang through his nose, turning his head from right to left:—

"The Son of Man goes forth to war,
A golden crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar—
Who follows in his train?"

I waited to hear no more, but put the poor wretch into my carriage and drove him off to the nearest missionary for eventual transfer to the Asylum. He repeated the hymn twice while he was with me, whom he did not in the least recognise, and I left him singing it to the missionary.

Two days later I enquired after his welfare of the Superintendent of the Asylum.

"He was admitted suffering from sun-stroke. He died early yesterday morning," said the Superintendent. "Is it true that he was half an hour bareheaded in the sun at midday?"

"Yes," said I, "but do you happen to know if he had anything upon him by any chance when he died?"

"Not to my knowledge," said the Superintendent.

And there the matter rests.

BUBBLING WELL ROAD

Look out on a large-scale map the place where the Chenab river falls into the Indus fifteen miles or so above the hamlet of Chachuran. Five miles west of Chachuran lies Bubbling Well Road, and the house of the *gosain* or priest of Arti-goth. It was the priest who showed me the road, but it is no thanks to him that I am able to tell this story.

Five miles west of Chachuran is a patch of the plumed jungle-grass, that turns over in silver when the wind blows, from ten to twenty feet high and from three to four miles square. In the heart of the patch hides the *gosain* of Bubbling Well Road. The villagers stone him when he peers into the daylight, although he is a priest, and he runs back again as a strayed wolf turns into tall crops. He is a one-eyed man and carries, burnt between his brows, the impress of two copper coins. Some say that he was tortured by a native prince in the old days; for he is so old that he must have been capable of mischief in the days of Runjit Singh. His most pressing need at present is a halter, and the care of the British Government.

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These things happened when the jungle-grass was tall, and the villagers of Chachuran told me that a sounder of pig had gone into the Arti-goth patch. To enter jungle-grass is always an unwise proceeding, but I went, partly because I knew nothing of pig-hunting, and partly because the villagers said that the big boar of the sounder owned foot-long tushes. Therefore I wished to shoot him, in order to produce the tushes in after years, and say that I had ridden him down in fair chase. I took a gun and went into the hot, close patch, believing that it would be an easy thing to unearth one pig in ten square miles of jungle. Mr. Wardle, the terrier, went with me because he believed that I was incapable of existing for an hour without his advice and countenance. He managed to slip in and out between the grass clumps, but I had to force my way, and in twenty minutes was as completely lost as though I had been in the heart of Central Africa. I did not notice this at first till I had grown wearied of stumbling and pushing through the grass, and Mr. Wardle was beginning to sit down very often and hang out his tongue very far. There was nothing but grass everywhere, and it was impossible to see two yards in any direction. The grass-stems held the heat exactly as boiler-tubes do.

In half an hour, when I was devoutly wishing that I had left the big boar alone, I came to a

narrow path which seemed to be a compromise between a native foot-path and a pig-run. It was barely six inches wide, but I could slide along it in comfort. The grass was extremely thick here, and where the path was ill-defined it was necessary to crush into the tussock either with both hands before the face, or to back into it, leaving both hands free to manage the rifle. None the less it was a path, and valuable because it might lead to a place.

At the end of nearly fifty yards of fair way, just when I was preparing to back into an unusually stiff tussock, I missed Mr. Wardle, who for his girth is an unusually frivolous dog and never keeps to heel. I called him three times and said aloud, "Where has the little beast gone to?" Then I stepped backwards several paces, for almost under my feet a deep voice repeated, "Where has the little beast gone?" To appreciate an unseen voice thoroughly you should hear it when you are lost in stifling jungle-grass. I called Mr. Wardle again, and the underground echo assisted me. At that I ceased calling and listened very attentively, because I thought I heard a man laughing in a peculiarly offensive manner. The heat made me sweat, but the laughter made me shake. There is no earthly need for laughter in high grass. It is indecent, as well as impolite. The chuckling stopped, and I took courage and continued to call till I thought

that I had located the echo somewhere behind and below the tussock into which I was preparing to back just before I lost Mr. Wardle. I drove my rifle up to the triggers between the grass-stems in a downward and forward direction. Then I waggled it to and fro, but it did not seem to touch ground on the far side of the tussock as it should have done. Every time that I grunted with the exertion of driving a heavy rifle through thick grass, the grunt was faithfully repeated from below, and when I stopped to wipe my face the sound of low laughter was distinct beyond doubting.

I went into the tussock, face first, an inch at a time, my mouth open and my eyes fine, full, and prominent. When I had overcome the resistance of the grass I found that I was looking straight across a black gap in the ground — that I was actually lying on my chest leaning over the mouth of a well so deep I could scarcely see the water in it.

There were things in the water,— black things, — and the water was as black as pitch with blue scum atop. The laughing sound came from the noise of a little spring, spouting half-way down one side of the well. Sometimes, as the black things circled round, the trickle from the spring fell upon their tightly-stretched skins, and then the laughter changed into a sputter of mirth. One

thing turned over on its back, as I watched, and drifted round and round the circle of the mossy brickwork with a hand and half an arm held clear of the water in a stiff and horrible flourish, as though it were a very wearied guide paid to exhibit the beauties of the place.

I did not spend more than half-an-hour in creeping round that well and finding the path on the other side. The remainder of the journey I accomplished by feeling every foot of ground in front of me, and crawling like a snail through every tussock. I carried Mr. Wardle in my arms and he licked my nose. He was not frightened in the least, nor was I, but we wished to reach open ground in order to enjoy the view. My knees were loose, and the apple in my throat refused to slide up and down. The path on the far side of the well was a very good one, though boxed in on all sides by grass, and it led me in time to a priest's hut in the centre of a little clearing. When that priest saw my very white face coming through the grass he howled with terror and embraced my boots; but when I reached the bedstead set outside his door I sat down quickly and Mr. Wardle mounted guard over me. I was not in a condition to take care of myself.

When I awoke I told the priest to lead me into the open, out of the Arti-goth patch, and to walk slowly in front of me. Mr. Wardle hates

natives, and the priest was more afraid of Mr. Wardle than of me, though we were both angry. He walked very slowly down a narrow little path from his hut. That path crossed three paths, such as the one I had come by in the first instance, and every one of the three headed towards the Bubbling Well. Once when we stopped to draw breath, I heard the Well laughing to itself alone in the thick grass, and only my need for his services prevented my firing both barrels into the priest's back.

When we came to the open the priest crashed back into cover, and I went to the village of Arti-goth for a drink. It was pleasant to be able to see the horizon all round, as well as the ground underfoot.

The villagers told me that the patch of grass was full of devils and ghosts, all in the service of the priest, and that men and women and children had entered it and had never returned. They said the priest used their livers for purposes of witchcraft. When I asked why they had not told me of this at the outset, they said that they were afraid they would lose their reward for bringing news of the pig.

Before I left I did my best to set the patch alight, but the grass was too green. Some fine summer day, however, if the wind is favourable, a file of old newspapers and a box of matches will make clear the mystery of Bubbling Well Road.

"THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD"

"Or ever the knightly years were gone
With the old world to the grave,
I was a king in Babylon
And you were a Christian slave."

W. E. Henley.

His name was Charlie Mears; he was the only son of his mother, who was a widow, and he lived in the north of London, coming into the City every day to work in a bank. He was twenty years old and suffered from aspirations. I met him in a public billiard-saloon where the marker called him by his first name, and he called the marker "Bullseyes." Charlie explained, a little nervously, that he had only come to the place to look on, and since looking on at games of skill is not a cheap amusement for the young, I suggested that Charlie should go back to his mother.

That was our first step towards better acquaintance. He would call on me sometimes in the evenings instead of running about London with his fellow-clerks; and before long, speaking of himself as a young man must, he told me of his

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aspirations, which were all literary. He desired to make himself an undying name chiefly through verse, though he was not above sending stories of love and death to the penny-in-the-slot journals. It was my fate to sit still while Charlie read me poems of many hundred lines, and bulky fragments of plays that would surely shake the world. My reward was his unreserved confidence, and the self-revelations and troubles of a young man are almost as holy as those of a maiden. Charlie had never fallen in love, but was anxious to do so at the first opportunity; he believed in all things good and all things honourable, but at the same time was curiously careful to let me see that he knew his way about the world as befitted a bank-clerk on twenty-five shillings a week. He rhymed "dove" with "love" and "moon" with "June," and devoutly believed that they had never so been rhymed before. The long lame gaps in his plays he filled up with hasty words of apology and description, and swept on, seeing all that he intended to do so clearly that he esteemed it already done, and turned to me for applause.

I fancy that his mother did not encourage his aspirations, and I know that his writing-table at home was the edge of his washstand. This he told me almost at the outset of our acquaintance, when he was ravaging my bookshelves, and a lit-

tle before I was implored to speak the truth as to his chances of "writing something really great, you know." Maybe I encouraged him too much, for, one night, he called on me, his eyes flaming with excitement, and said breathlessly:—

"Do you mind—can you let me stay here and write all this evening? I won't interrupt you, I won't really. There's no place for me to write in at my mother's."

"What's the trouble?" I said, knowing well what that trouble was.

"I've a notion in my head that would make the most splendid story that was ever written. Do let me write it out here. It's *such* a notion!"

There was no resisting the appeal. I set him a table; he hardly thanked me, but plunged into the work at once. For half an hour the pen scratched without stopping. Then Charlie sighed and tugged his hair. The scratching grew slower; there were more erasures; and at last ceased. The finest story in the world would not come forth.

"It looks such awful rot now," he said mournfully. "And yet it seemed so good when I was thinking about it. What's wrong?"

I could not dishearten him by saying the truth. So I answered: "Perhaps you don't feel in the mood for writing."

"Yes, I do — except when I look at this stuff. Ugh!"

"Read me what you've done," I said.

He read, and it was wondrous bad, and he paused at all the specially turgid sentences, expecting a little approval; for he was proud of those sentences, as I knew he would be.

"It needs compression," I suggested cautiously.

"I hate cutting my things down. I don't think you could alter a word here without spoiling the sense. It reads better aloud than when I was writing it."

"Charlie, you're suffering from an alarming disease afflicting a numerous class. Put the thing by, and tackle it again in a week."

"I want to do it at once. What do you think of it?"

"How can I judge from a half-written tale? Tell me the story as it lies in your head."

Charlie told, and in the telling there was everything that his ignorance had so carefully prevented from escaping into the written word. I looked at him, wondering whether it were possible that he did not know the originality, the power of the notion that had come in his way? It was distinctly a Notion among notions. Men had been puffed up with pride by ideas not a tithe as excellent and practicable. But Charlie babbled on serenely, interrupting the current of pure fancy with samples of horrible sentences that he proposed to use. I heard him out to the end. It

would be folly to allow his thought to remain in his own inept hands, when I could do so much with it. Not all that could be done indeed; but, oh so much!

"What do you think?" he said at last. "I fancy I shall call it 'The Story of a Ship.'"

"I think the idea is pretty good; but you won't be able to handle it for ever so long. Now I——"

"Would it be of any use to you? Would you care to take it? I should be proud," said Charlie promptly.

There are few things sweeter in this world than the guileless, hot-headed, intemperate, open admiration of a junior. Even a woman in her blindest devotion does not fall into the gait of the man she adores, tilt her bonnet to the angle at which he wears his hat, or interlard her speech with his pet oaths. And Charlie did all these things. Still it was necessary to salve my conscience before I possessed myself of Charlie's thought.

"Let's make a bargain. I'll give you a fiver for the notion," I said.

Charlie became a bank-clerk at once.

"Oh, that's impossible. Between two pals, you know, if I may call you so, and speaking as a man of the world, I couldn't. Take the notion, if it's any use to you. I've heaps more."

He had — none knew this better than I — but they were the notions of other men.

"Look at it as a matter of business — between men of the world," I returned. "Five pounds will buy you any number of poetry-books. Business is business, and you may be sure I shouldn't give that price unless ——"

"Oh, if you put it *that* way," said Charlie, visibly moved by the thought of the books. The bargain was clinched with an agreement that he should at unstated intervals come to me with all the notions that he possessed, should have a table of his own to write at, and unquestioned right to inflict upon me all his poems and fragments of poems. Then I said, "Now tell me how you came by this idea."

"It came by itself." Charlie's eyes opened a little.

"Yes, but you told me a great deal about the hero that you must have read before somewhere."

"I haven't any time for reading, except when you let me sit here, and on Sundays I'm on my bicycle or down the river all day. There's nothing wrong about the hero, is there?"

"Tell me again and I shall understand clearly. You say that your hero went pirating. How did he live?"

"He was on the lower deck of this ship-thing that I was telling you about."

"What sort of ship?"

"It was the kind rowed with oars, and the sea spurts through the oar-holes and the men row sit-

ting up to their knees in water. Then there's a bench running down between the two lines of oars, and an overseer with a whip walks up and down the bench to make the men work."

"How do you know that?"

"It's in the tale. There's a rope running overhead, looped to the upper deck, for the overseer to catch hold of when the ship rolls. When the overseer misses the rope once and falls among the rowers, remember the hero laughs at him and gets licked for it. He's chained to his oar of course — the hero."

"How is he chained?"

"With an iron band round his waist fixed to the bench he sits on, and a sort of handcuff on his left wrist chaining him to the oar. He's on the lower deck where the worst men are sent, and the only light comes from the hatchways and through the oar-holes. Can't you imagine the sunlight just squeezing through between the handle and the hole and wobbling about as the ship rolls?"

"I can, but I can't imagine your imagining it."

"How could it be any other way? Now you listen to me. The long oars on the upper deck are managed by four men to each bench, the lower ones by three, and the lowest of all by two. Remember it's quite dark on the lowest deck, and all the men there go mad. When a man dies at his oar on that deck he isn't thrown overboard, but

cut up in his chains and stuffed through the oar-hole in little pieces."

"Why?" I demanded, amazed, not so much at the information as the tone of command in which it was flung out.

"To save trouble and to frighten the others. It needs two overseers to drag a man's body up to the top deck; and if the men at the lower-deck oars were left alone, of course they'd stop rowing and try to pull up the benches by all standing up together in their chains."

"You've a most provident imagination. Where have you been reading about galleys and galley-slaves?"

"Nowhere that I remember. I row a little when I get the chance. But, perhaps, if you say so, I may have read something."

He went away shortly afterwards to deal with booksellers, and I wondered how a bank-clerk aged twenty could put into my hands, with a profligate abundance of detail, all given with absolute assurance, the story of extravagant and bloodthirsty adventure, riot, piracy, and death in unnamed seas. He had led his hero a desperate dance through revolt against the overseers, to command of a ship of his own, and the ultimate establishment of a kingdom on an island "somewhere in the sea, you know;" and, delighted with my paltry five pounds, had gone out to buy the notions of other men,

that these might teach him how to write. I had the consolation of knowing that this notion was mine by right of purchase; and I thought that I could make something of it.

When next he came to me he was drunk — royally drunk — on many poets for the first time revealed to him. His pupils were dilated, his words tumbled over each other, and he wrapped himself in quotations — as a beggar would enfold himself in the purple of Emperors. Most of all was he drunk with Longfellow.

"Isn't it splendid? Isn't it superb?" he cried, after hasty greetings. Listen to this —

> "'Wouldst thou,' — so the helmsman answered,
> 'Know the secret of the sea?
> Only those who brave its dangers
> Comprehend its mystery.'

By gum!

> "'Only those who brave its dangers
> Comprehend its mystery,'"

he repeated twenty times, walking up and down the room and forgetting me. "But *I* can understand it too," he said to himself. "I don't know how to thank you for that fiver. And this; listen —

> "'I remember the black wharves and the slips
> And the sea-tides tossing free;
> And the Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
> And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
> And the magic of the sea.'

I haven't braved any dangers, but I feel as if I knew all about it."

"You certainly seem to have a grip of the sea. Have you ever seen it?"

"When I was a little chap I went to Brighton once; we used to live in Coventry, though, before we came to London. I never saw it,

"'When descends on the Atlantic
The gigantic
Storm-wind of the Equinox.'"

He shook me by the shoulder to make me understand the passion that was shaking himself.

"When that storm comes," he continued, "I think that all the oars in the ship that I was talking about get broken, and the rowers have their chests smashed in by the oar-heads bucking. By the way, have you done anything with that notion of mine yet?"

"No. I was waiting to hear more of it from you. Tell me how in the world you're so certain about the fittings of the ship. You know nothing of ships."

"I don't know. It's as real as anything to me until I try to write it down. I was thinking about it only last night in bed, after you had lent me 'Treasure Island'; and I made up a whole lot of new things to go into the story."

"What sort of things?"

"About the food the men ate; rotten figs and

black beans and wine in a skin bag, passed from bench to bench."

"Was the ship built so long ago as *that?*"

"As what? I don't know whether it was long ago or not. It's only a notion, but sometimes it seems just as real as if it was true. Do I bother you with talking about it?"

"Not in the least. Did you make up anything else?"

"Yes, but it's nonsense." Charlie flushed a little.

"Never mind; let's hear about it."

"Well, I was thinking over the story, and after awhile I got out of bed and wrote down on a piece of paper the sort of stuff the men might be supposed to scratch on their oars with the edges of their handcuffs. It seemed to make the thing more life-like. It *is* so real to me, y'know."

"Have you the paper on you?"

"Ye—es, but what's the use of showing it? It's only a lot of scratches. All the same, we might have 'em reproduced in the book on the front page."

"I'll attend to those details. Show me what your men wrote."

He pulled out of his pocket a sheet of note-paper, with a single line of scratches upon it, and I put this carefully away.

"What is it supposed to mean in English?" I said.

"Oh, I don't know. I mean it to mean 'I'm beastly tired.' It's great nonsense," he repeated, "but all those men in the ship seem as real as real people to me. Do do something to the notion soon; I should like to see it written and printed."

"But all you've told me would make a long book."

"Make it, then. You've only to sit down and write it out."

"Give me a little time. Have you any more notions?"

"Not just now. I'm reading all the books I've bought. They're splendid."

When he had left I looked at the sheet of notepaper with the inscription upon it. Then I took my head tenderly between both hands, to make certain that it was not coming off or turning round. Then . . . but there seemed to be no interval between leaving my rooms and finding myself arguing with a policeman outside a door marked *Private* in a corridor of the British Museum. All I demanded, as politely as possible, was "the Greek antiquity man." The policeman knew nothing except the rules of the Museum, and it became necessary to forage through all the houses and offices inside the gates. An elderly gentleman called away from his lunch put an end to my search by holding the notepaper between finger and thumb and sniffing at it scornfully.

"What does this mean? H'mm," said he. "So far as I can ascertain it is an attempt to write extremely corrupt Greek on the part"—here he glared at me with intention—"of an extremely illiterate—ah—person." He read slowly from the paper, "*Pollock, Erckmann, Tauchnitz, Henniker*"—four names familiar to me.

"Can you tell me what the corruption is supposed to mean—the gist of the thing?" I asked.

"I have been—many times—overcome with weariness in this particular employment. That is the meaning." He returned me the paper, and I fled without a word of thanks, explanation, or apology.

I might have been excused for forgetting much. To me of all men had been given the chance to write the most marvellous tale in the world, nothing less than the story of a Greek galley-slave, as told by himself. Small wonder that his dreaming had seemed real to Charlie. The Fates that are so careful to shut the doors of each successive life behind us had, in this case, been neglectful, and Charlie was looking, though that he did not know, where never man had been permitted to look with full knowledge since Time began. Above all, he was absolutely ignorant of the knowledge sold to me for five pounds; and he would retain that ignorance; for bank-clerks do not understand metempsychosis, and a sound

commercial education does not include Greek. He would supply me — here I capered among the dumb gods of Egypt and laughed in their battered faces — with material to make my tale sure — so sure that the world would hail it as an impudent and vamped fiction. And I — I alone would know that it was absolutely and literally true. I — I alone held this jewel to my hand for the cutting and polishing. Therefore I danced again among the gods of the Egyptian court, till a policeman saw me and took steps in my direction.

It remained now only to encourage Charlie to talk, and here there was no difficulty. But I had forgotten those accursed books of poetry. He came to me time after time, as useless as a surcharged phonograph — drunk on Byron, Shelley, or Keats. Knowing now what the boy had been in his past lives, and desperately anxious not to lose one word of his babble, I could not hide from him my respect and interest. He misconstrued both into respect for the present soul of Charlie Mears, to whom life was as new as it was to Adam, and interest in his readings: he stretched my patience to breaking point by reciting poetry — not his own now, but that of others. I wished every English poet blotted out of the memory of mankind. I blasphemed the mightiest names of song because they had drawn Charlie from the path of direct narrative, and would, later, spur him

to imitate them; but I choked down my impatience until the first flood of enthusiasm should have spent itself and the boy returned to his dreams.

"What's the use of my telling you what *I* think, when these chaps wrote things for the angels to read?" he growled, one evening. "Why don't you write something like theirs?"

"I don't think you're treating me quite fairly," I said, speaking under strong restraint.

"I've given you the story," he said shortly, replunging into "Lara."

"But I want the details."

"The things I make up about that damned ship that you call a galley? They're quite easy. You can just make 'em up for yourself. Turn up the gas a little, I want to go on reading."

I could have broken the gas-globe over his head for his amazing stupidity. I could indeed make up things for myself did I only know what Charlie did not know that he knew. But since the doors were shut behind me, I could only wait his youthful pleasure and strive to keep him in good temper. One minute's want of guard might spoil a priceless revelation: now and again he would toss his books aside—he kept them in my rooms, for his mother would have been shocked at the waste of good money had she seen them—and launched into his sea dreams. Again I cursed all the poets of England. The plastic mind of the bank-clerk had

been overlaid, coloured, and distorted by that which he had read, and the result as delivered was a confused tangle of other voices most like the mutter and hum through a City telephone in the busiest part of the day.

He talked of the galley — his own galley, had he but known it — with illustrations borrowed from the "Bride of Abydos." He pointed the experiences of his hero with quotations from "The Corsair," and threw in deep and desperate moral reflections from "Cain" and "Manfred," expecting me to use them all. Only when the talk turned on Longfellow were the jarring cross-currents dumb, and I knew that Charlie was speaking the truth as he remembered it.

"What do you think of this?" I said one evening, as soon as I understood the medium in which his memory worked best, and, before he could expostulate, read him nearly the whole of "The Saga of King Olaf."

He listened open-mouthed, flushed, his hands drumming on the back of the sofa where he lay, till I came to the Song of Einar Tamberskelver and the verse: —

> "Einar then, the arrow taking
> From the loosened string,
> Answered, 'That was Norway breaking
> 'Neath thy hand, O King.'"

He gasped with pure delight of sound.

"That's better than Byron, a little?" I ventured.

"Better! Why, it's *true!* How could he have known?"

I went back and repeated:—

> "'What was that?' said Olaf, standing
> On the quarter-deck,
> 'Something heard I like the stranding
> Of a shattered wreck.'"

"How could he have known how the ships crash and the oars rip out and go *z-zzp* all along the line? Why, only the other night . . . But go back, please, and read 'The Skerry of Shrieks' again."

"No, I'm tired. Let's talk. What happened the other night?"

"I had an awful dream about that galley of ours. I dreamed I was drowned in a fight. You see, we ran alongside another ship in harbour. The water was dead still except where our oars whipped it up. You know where I always sit in the galley?" He spoke haltingly at first, under the fine English fear of being laughed at.

"No. That's news to me," I answered meekly, my heart beginning to beat.

"On the fourth oar from the bow on the right side on the upper deck. There were four of us at that oar, all chained. I remember watching the water and trying to get my handcuffs off before the

row began. Then we closed up on the other ship, and all their fighting men jumped over our bulwarks, and my bench broke and I was pinned down with the three other fellows on top of me, and the big oar jammed across our backs."

"Well?" Charlie's eyes were alive and alight. He was looking at the wall behind my chair.

"I don't know how we fought. The men were trampling all over my back, and I lay low. Then our rowers on the left side — tied to their oars, you know — began to yell and back water. I could hear the water sizzle, and we spun round like a cockchafer, and I knew, lying where I was, that there was a galley coming up, bow on, to ram us on the left side. I could just lift up my head and see her sail over the bulwarks. We wanted to meet her bow to bow, but it was too late. We could only turn a little bit because the galley on our right had hooked herself on to us and stopped our moving. Then, by gum! there was a crash! Our left oars began to break as the other galley — the moving one, y'know — stuck her nose into them. Then the lower-deck oars shot up through the deck-planking, butt first, and one of them jumped clear up into the air and came down again close at my head."

"How was that managed?"

"The moving galley's bow was plunking them back through their own oar-holes, and I could hear

no end of a shindy in the decks below. Then her nose caught us nearly in the middle, and we tilted sideways, and the fellows in the right-hand galley unhitched their hooks and ropes, and threw things on to our upper deck — arrows, and hot pitch or something that stung, and we went up and up on the left side, and the right side dipped, and I twisted my head round and saw the water stand still as it topped the right bulwarks; and then it curled over and crashed down on the whole lot of us on the right side, and I felt it hit my back, and I woke."

"One minute, Charlie. When the sea topped the bulwarks, what did it look like?" I had my reasons for asking. A man of my acquaintance had once gone down with a leaking ship in a still sea, and had seen the water-level pause for an instant ere it fell on the deck.

"It looked just like a banjo-string drawn tight, and it seemed to stay there for years," said Charlie.

Exactly! The other man had said: "It looked like a silver wire laid down along the bulwarks, and I thought it was never going to break." He had paid everything except the bare life for this little valueless piece of knowledge, and I had travelled ten thousand weary miles to meet him and take his knowledge at second hand. But Charlie, the bank-clerk on twenty-five shillings a week, who had never been out of sight of a made road,

knew it all. It was no consolation to me that once in his lives he had been forced to die for his gains. I also must have died scores of times, but behind me, because I could have used my knowledge, the doors were shut!

"And then?" I said, trying to put away the devil of envy.

"The funny thing was, though, in all the row I didn't feel a bit astonished or frightened. It seemed as if I'd been in a good many fights, because I told my next man so when the row began. But that cad of an overseer on my deck wouldn't unloose our chains and give us a chance. He always said that we'd all be set free after a battle, but we never were; we never were." Charlie shook his head mournfully.

"What a scoundrel!"

"I should say he was. He never gave us enough to eat, and sometimes we were so thirsty that we used to drink salt-water. I can taste that salt-water still."

"Now tell me something about the harbour where the fight was fought."

"I didn't dream about that. I know it was a harbour, though, because we were tied up to a ring on a white wall, and all the face of the stone under water was covered with wood to prevent our ram getting chipped when the tide made us rock."

"That's curious. Our hero commanded the galley, didn't he?"

"Didn't he just! He stood by the bows and shouted like a good un. He was the man who killed the overseer."

"But you were all drowned together, Charlie, weren't you?"

"I can't make that fit quite," he said, with a puzzled look. "The galley must have gone down with all hands, and yet I fancy that the hero went on living afterwards. Perhaps he climbed into the attacking ship. I wouldn't see that, of course. I was dead, you know."

He shivered slightly and protested that he could remember no more.

I did not press him further, but to satisfy myself that he lay in ignorance of the workings of his own mind, deliberately introduced him to Mortimer Collins's "Transmigration," and gave him a sketch of the plot before he opened the pages.

"What rot it all is!" he said frankly, at the end of an hour. "I don't understand his nonsense about the Red Planet Mars and the King, and the rest of it. Chuck me the Longfellow again."

I handed him the book and wrote out as much as I could remember of his description of the sea-fight, appealing to him from time to time for con-

firmation of fact or detail. He would answer without raising his eyes from the book, as assuredly as though all his knowledge lay before him on the printed page. I spoke under the normal key of my voice that the current might not be broken, and I know that he was not aware of what he was saying, for his thoughts were out on the sea with Longfellow.

"Charlie," I asked, "when the rowers on the galleys mutinied how did they kill their overseers?"

"Tore up the benches and brained 'em. That happened when a heavy sea was running. An overseer on the lower deck slipped from the centre plank and fell among the rowers. They choked him to death against the side of the ship with their chained hands quite quietly, and it was too dark for the other overseer to see what had happened. When he asked he was pulled down too and choked, and the lower deck fought their way up deck by deck, with the pieces of the broken benches banging behind 'em. How they howled!"

"And what happened after that?"

"I don't know. The hero went away — red hair and red beard and all. That was after he had captured our galley, I think."

The sound of my voice irritated him, and he motioned slightly with his left hand as a man does when interruption jars.

"You never told me he was red-headed before or that he captured your galley," I said, after a discreet interval.

Charlie did not raise his eyes.

"He was as red as a red bear," said he abstractedly. "He came from the north; they said so in the galley when he looked for rowers — not for slaves, but free men. Afterwards — years and years afterwards — news came from another ship, or else he came back ——"

His lips moved in silence. He was rapturously retasting some poem before him.

"Where had he been, then?" I was almost whispering that the sentence might come gently to whichever section of Charlie's brain that was working on my behalf.

"To the Beaches — the Long and Wonderful Beaches!" was the reply after a minute of silence.

"To Furdurstrandi?" I asked, tingling from head to foot.

"Yes, to Furdurstrandi"—he pronounced the word in a new fashion. "And I too saw ——" The voice failed.

"Do you know what you have said?" I shouted incautiously.

He lifted his eyes, fully roused now. "No!" he snapped. "I wish you'd let a chap go on reading. Hark to this: —

"'But Othere, the old sea-captain,
He neither paused nor stirred
Till the king listened, and then
Once more took up his pen
And wrote down every word.

"'And to the King of the Saxons
In witness of the truth,
Raising his noble head,
He stretched his brown hand and said,
"Behold this walrus tooth."'

By Jove, what chaps those must have been, to go sailing all over the shop, never knowing where they'd fetch the land! Hah!"

"Charlie," I pleaded, "if you'll only be sensible for a minute or two I'll make our hero in our tale every inch as good as Othere."

"Umph! Longfellow wrote that poem. I don't care about writing things any more. I want to read." He was thoroughly out of tune now, and raging over my own ill-luck, I left him.

Conceive yourself at the door of the world's treasure-house guarded by a child—an idle, irresponsible child playing knuckle-bones—on whose favour depends the gift of the key, and you will imagine one-half my torment. Till that evening Charlie had spoken nothing that might not lie within the experiences of a Greek galley-slave. But now, or there was no virtue in books, he had talked of some desperate adventure of the Vikings,

of Thorfin Karlsefne's sailing to Wineland, which is America, in the ninth or tenth century. The battle in the harbour he had seen; and his own death he had described. But this was a much more startling plunge into the past. Was it possible that he had skipped half a dozen lives and was then dimly remembering some episode of a thousand years later? It was a maddening jumble, and the worst of it was that Charlie Mears in his normal condition was the last person in the world to clear it up. I could only wait and watch, but I went to bed that night full of the wildest imaginings. There was nothing that was not possible if Charlie's detestable memory only held good.

I might rewrite the Saga of Thorfin Karlsefne as it had never been written before, might tell the story of the first discovery of America, myself the discoverer. But I was entirely at Charlie's mercy, and so long as there was a three-and-sixpenny Bohn volume within his reach Charlie would not tell. I dared not curse him openly; I hardly dared jog his memory, for I was dealing with the experiences of a thousand years ago, told through the mouth of a boy of to-day; and a boy of to-day is affected by every change of tone and gust of opinion, so that he must lie even when he most desires to speak the truth.

I saw no more of Charlie for nearly a week.

When next I met him it was in Gracechurch Street with a bill-book chained to his waist. Business took him over London Bridge, and I accompanied him. He was very full of the importance of that book and magnified it. As we passed over the Thames we paused to look at a steamer unloading great slabs of white and brown marble. A barge drifted under the steamer's stern and a lonely ship's cow in that barge bellowed. Charlie's face changed from the face of the bank-clerk to that of an unknown and — though he would not have believed this — a much shrewder man. He flung out his arm across the parapet of the bridge and laughing very loudly, said:—

"When they heard *our* bulls bellow the Skrœlings ran away!"

I waited only for an instant, but the barge and the cow had disappeared under the bows of the steamer before I answered.

"Charlie, what do you suppose are Skrœlings?"

"Never heard of 'em before. They sound like a new kind of sea-gull. What a chap you are for asking questions!" he replied. "I have to go to the cashier of the Omnibus Company yonder. Will you wait for me and we can lunch somewhere together? I've a notion for a poem."

"No, thanks. I'm off. You're sure you know nothing about Skrœlings?"

"Not unless he's been entered for the Liver-

pool Handicap." He nodded and disappeared in the crowd.

Now it is written in the Saga of Eric the Red, or that of Thorfin Karlsefne, that nine hundred years ago, when Karlsefne's galleys came to Leif's booths, which Leif had erected in the unknown land called Markland, which may or may not have been Rhode Island, the Skrœlings — and the Lord He knows who these may or may not have been — came to trade with the Vikings, and ran away because they were frightened at the bellowing of the cattle which Thorfin had brought with him in the ships. But what in the world could a Greek slave know of that affair? I wandered up and down among the streets trying to unravel the mystery, and the more I considered it, the more baffling it grew. One thing only seemed certain, and that certainty took away my breath for the moment. If I came to full knowledge of anything at all, it would not be one life of the soul in Charlie Mears's body, but half a dozen — half a dozen several and separate existences spent on blue water in the morning of the world!

Then I walked round the situation.

Obviously if I used my knowledge I should stand alone and unapproachable until all men were as wise as myself. That would be something, but manlike I was ungrateful. It seemed bitterly unfair that Charlie's memory should fail

me when I needed it most. Great Powers above — I looked up at them through the fog smoke — did the Lords of Life and Death know what this meant to me? Nothing less than eternal fame of the best kind, that comes from One, and is shared by one alone. I would be content — remembering Clive, I stood astounded at my own moderation, — with the mere right to tell one story, to work out one little contribution to the light literature of the day. If Charlie were permitted full recollection for one hour — for sixty short minutes — of existences that had extended over a thousand years — I would forego all profit and honour from all that I should make of his speech. I would take no share in the commotion that would follow throughout the particular corner of the earth that calls itself "the world." The thing should be put forth anonymously. Nay, I would make other men believe that they had written it. They would hire bull-hided self-advertising Englishmen to bellow it abroad. Preachers would found a fresh conduct of life upon it, swearing that it was new and that they had lifted the fear of death from all mankind. Every Orientalist in Europe would patronise it discursively with Sanskrit and Pali texts. Terrible women would invent unclean variants of the men's belief for the elevation of their sisters. Churches and religions would war over it. Between the hailing and re-

starting of an omnibus I foresaw the scuffles that would arise among half a dozen denominations all professing "the doctrine of the True Metempsychosis as applied to the world and the New Era"; and saw, too, the respectable English newspapers shying, like frightened kine, over the beautiful simplicity of the tale. The mind leaped forward a hundred—two hundred—a thousand years I saw with sorrow that men would mutilate and garble the story; that rival creeds would turn it upside down till, at last, the western world, which clings to the dread of death more closely than the hope of life, would set it aside as an interesting superstition and stampede after some faith so long forgotten that it seemed altogether new. Upon this I changed the terms of the bargain that I would make with the Lords of Life and Death. Only let me know, let me write, the story with sure knowledge that I wrote the truth, and I would burn the manuscript as a solemn sacrifice. Five minutes after the last line was written I would destroy it all. But I must be allowed to write it with absolute certainty.

There was no answer. The flaming colours of an Aquarium poster caught my eye, and I wondered whether it would be wise or prudent to lure Charlie into the hands of the professional mesmerist there, and whether, if he were under his power, he would speak of his past lives. If he did, and if

people believed him . . . but Charlie would be frightened and fluttered, or made conceited by the interviews. In either case he would begin to lie, through fear or vanity. He was safest in my own hands.

"They are very funny fools, your English," said a voice at my elbow, and turning round I recognised a casual acquaintance, a young Bengali law student, called Grish Chunder, whose father had sent him to England to become civilised. The old man was a retired native official, and on an income of five pounds a month contrived to allow his son two hundred pounds a year, and the run of his teeth in a city where he could pretend to be the cadet of a royal house, and tell stories of the brutal Indian bureaucrats who ground the faces of the poor.

Grish Chunder was a young, fat, full-bodied Bengali, dressed with scrupulous care in frock-coat, tall hat, light trousers, and tan gloves. But I had known him in the days when the brutal Indian Government paid for his university education, and he contributed cheap sedition to *Sachi Durpan*, and intrigued with the wives of his fourteen-year-old schoolmates.

"That is very funny and very foolish," he said, nodding at the poster. "I am going down to the Northbrook Club. Will you come too?"

I walked with him for some time. "You are

not well," he said. "What is there on your mind? You do not talk."

"Grish Chunder, you've been too well educated to believe in a God, haven't you?"

"Oah, yes, *here!* But when I go home I must conciliate popular superstition, and make ceremonies of purification, and my women will anoint idols."

"And hang up *tulsi* and feast the *purohît*, and take you back into caste again and make a good *khuttri* of you again, you advanced social Freethinker. And you'll eat *desi* food, and like it all, from the smell in the courtyard to the mustard oil over you."

"I shall very much like it," said Grish Chunder unguardedly. "Once a Hindu—always a Hindu. But I like to know what the English think they know."

"I'll tell you something that one Englishman knows. It's an old tale to you."

I began to tell the story of Charlie in English, but Grish Chunder put a question in the vernacular, and the history went forward naturally in the tongue best suited for its telling. After all, it could never have been told in English. Grish Chunder heard me, nodding from time to time, and then came up to my rooms, where I finished the tale.

"*Beshak*," he said philosophically. "*Lekin dar-*

waza band hai. (Without doubt, but the door is shut.) I have heard of this remembering of previous existences among my people. It is of course an old tale with us, but to happen to an Englishman — a cow-fed *Mlechh* — an outcast. By Jove, that is most peculiar!"

"Outcast yourself, Grish Chunder! You eat cow-beef every day. Let's think the thing over. The boy remembers his incarnations."

"Does he know that?" said Grish Chunder quietly, swinging his legs as he sat on my table. He was speaking in his English now.

"He does not know anything. Would I speak to you if he did? Go on!"

"There is no going on at all. If you tell that to your friends they will say you are mad and put it in the papers. Suppose, now, you prosecute for libel."

"Let's leave that out of the question entirely. Is there any chance of his being made to speak?"

"There is a chance. Oah, yess! But *if* he spoke it would mean that all this world would end now — *instanto* — fall down on your head. These things are not allowed, you know. As I said, the door is shut."

"Not a ghost of a chance?"

"How can there be? You are a Christi-án, and it is forbidden to eat, in your books, of the Tree of Life, or else you would never die. How

shall you all fear death if you all know what your friend does not know that he knows? I am afraid to be kicked, but I am not afraid to die, because I know what I know. You are not afraid to be kicked, but you are afraid to die. If you were not, by God! you English would be all over the shop in an hour, upsetting the balances of power, and making commotions. It would not be good. But no fear. He will remember a little and a little less, and he will call it dreams. Then he will forget altogether. When I passed my First Arts Examination in Calcutta that was all in the cram-book on Wordsworth. 'Trailing clouds of glory,' you know."

"This seems to be an exception to the rule."

"There are no exceptions to rules. Some are not so hard-looking as others, but they are all the same when you touch. If this friend of yours said so-and-so and so-and-so, indicating that he remembered all his lost lives, or one piece of a lost life, he would not be in the bank another hour. He would be what you called sack because he was mad, and they would send him to an asylum for lunatics. You can see that, my friend."

"Of course I can, but I wasn't thinking of him. His name need never appear in the story."

"Ah! I see. That story will never be written. You can try."

"I am going to."

"For your own credit and for the sake of money, *of* course?"

"No. For the sake of writing the story. On my honour, that will be all."

"Even then there is no chance. You cannot play with the Gods. It is a very pretty story now. As they say, Let it go on that — I mean at that. Be quick; he will not last long."

"How do you mean?"

"What I say. He has never, so far, thought about a woman."

"Hasn't he, though!" I remembered some of Charlie's confidences.

"I mean no woman has thought about him. When that comes, *bus — hogya* — all up! I know. There are millions of women here. Housemaids, for instance. They kiss you behind doors."

I winced at the thought of my story being ruined by a housemaid. And yet nothing was more probable.

Grish Chunder grinned.

"Yes — also pretty girls — cousins of his house, and perhaps *not* of his house. One kiss that he gives back again and remembers will cure all this nonsense, or else ——"

"Or else what? Remember he does not know that he knows."

"I know that. Or else, if nothing happens, he will become immersed in the trade and the finan-

cial speculations like the rest. It must be so. You can see that it must be so. But the woman will come first, *I* think."

There was a rap at the door, and Charlie charged in impetuously. He had been released from office; and by the look in his eyes I could see that he had come over for a long talk; most probably with poems in his pockets. Charlie's poems were very wearying, but sometimes they led him to talk about the galley.

Grish Chunder looked at him keenly for a minute.

"I beg your pardon," Charlie said uneasily; "I didn't know you had any one with you."

"I am going," said Grish Chunder.

He drew me into the lobby as he departed.

"That is your man," he said quickly. "I tell you he will never speak all you wish. That is rot — bosh! But he would be most good to make to see things. Suppose now we pretend that it was only play" — I had never seen Grish Chunder so excited — "and pour the ink-pool into his hand. Eh, what do you think? I tell you that he could see *anything* that a man could see. Let me get the ink and the camphor. He is a seer and he will tell us very many things."

"He may be all you say, but I'm not going to trust him to your gods and devils."

"They will not hurt him. He will only feel a

little stupid and dull when he wakes up. You have seen boys look into the ink-pool before."

"That is the reason why I am not going to see it any more. You'd better go, Grish Chunder."

He went, insisting far down the staircase that it was throwing away my only chance of looking into the future.

This left me unmoved, for I was concerned for the past, and no peering of hypnotised boys into mirrors and ink-pools would help me to that. But I recognised Grish Chunder's point of view and sympathised with it.

"What a big black brute that was!" said Charlie, when I returned to him. "Well, look here, I've just done a poem; did it instead of playing dominoes after lunch. May I read it?"

"Let me read it to myself."

"Then you miss the proper expression. Besides, you always make my things sound as if the rhymes were all wrong."

"Read it aloud, then. You're like the rest of 'em."

Charlie mouthed me his poem, and it was not much worse than the average of his verses. He had been reading his books faithfully, but he was not pleased when I told him that I preferred my Longfellow undiluted with Charlie.

Then we began to go through the MS. line by line; Charlie parrying every objection and correction with:

"Yes, that may be better, but you don't catch what I'm driving at."

Charlie was, in one way at least, very like one kind of poet.

There was a pencil scrawl at the back of the paper, and "What's that?" I said.

"Oh, that's not poetry at all. It's some rot I wrote last night before I went to bed, and it was too much bother to hunt for rhymes; so I made it a sort of blank verse instead."

Here is Charlie's "blank verse":—

"We pulled for you when the wind was against us and the sails were low.

Will you never let us go?

We ate bread and onions when you took towns or ran aboard quickly when you were beaten back by the foe,

The captains walked up and down the deck in fair weather singing songs, but we were below,

We fainted with our chins on the oars and you did not see that we were idle for we still swung to and fro.

Will you never let us go?

The salt made the oar-handles like shark-skin; our knees were cut to the bone with salt cracks; our hair was stuck to our foreheads; and our lips were cut to our gums and you whipped us because we could not row.

Will you never let us go?

But in a little time we shall run out of the portholes as the water runs along the oar-blade, and though you tell the others to row after us you will never catch us till you catch the oar-thresh and tie up the winds in the belly of the sail. Aho!

Will you never let us go?"

"H'm. What's oar-thresh, Charlie?"

"The water washed up by the oars. That's the sort of song they might sing in the galley, y'know. Aren't you ever going to finish that story and give me some of the profits?"

"It depends on yourself. If you had only told me more about your hero in the first instance it might have been finished by now. You're so hazy in your notions."

"I only want to give you the general notion of it — the knocking about from place to place and the fighting and all that. Can't you fill in the rest yourself? Make the hero save a girl on a pirate-galley and marry her or do something."

"You're a realiy helpful collaborator. I suppose the hero went through some few adventures before he married."

"Well, then, make him a very artful card — a low sort of man — a sort of political man who went about making treaties and breaking them — a black-haired chap who hid behind the mast when the fighting began."

"But you said the other day that he was red-haired."

"I couldn't have. Make him black-haired of course. You've no imagination."

Seeing that I had just discovered the entire principles upon which our half-memory falsely

called imagination is based, I felt entitled to laugh, but forbore, for the sake of the tale.

"You're right. *You're* the man with imagination. A black-haired chap in a decked ship," I said.

"No, an open ship — like a big boat."

This was maddening.

"Your ship has been built and designed, closed and decked in; you said so yourself," I protested.

"No, no, not that ship. That was open or half-decked because — By Jove you're right! You made me think of the hero as a red-haired chap. Of course if he were red, the ship would be an open one with painted sails."

Surely, I thought, he would remember now that he had served in two galleys at least — in a three-decked Greek one under the black-haired "political man," and again in a Viking's open sea-serpent under the man "red as a red bear" who went to Markland. My devil prompted me to speak.

"Why, of course, Charlie?" said I.

"I don't know. Are you making fun of me?"

The current was broken for the time being. I took up a note-book and pretended to make many entries in it.

"It's a pleasure to work with an imaginative chap like yourself," I said, after a pause. "The way that you've brought out the character of the hero is simply wonderful."

"Do you think so?" he answered with a pleased flush. "I often tell myself that there's more in me than my mo—than people think."

"There's an enormous amount in you."

"Then won't you let me send an essay on The Ways of Bank-Clerks to 'Tit-Bits,' and get the guinea prize?"

"That wasn't exactly what I meant, old fellow: perhaps it would be better to wait a little and go ahead with the galley-story."

"Ah, but I sha'n't get the credit of that. 'Tit-Bits' would publish my name and address if I win. What are you grinning at? They *would*."

"I know it. Suppose you go for a walk. I want to look through my notes about our story."

Now this reprehensible youth who left me, a little hurt and put back, might for aught he or I knew have been one of the crew of the *Argo*—had been certainly slave or comrade to Thorfin Karlsefne. Therefore he was deeply interested in guinea competitions. Remembering what Grish Chunder had said, I laughed aloud. The Lords of Life and Death would never allow Charlie Mears to speak with full knowledge of his pasts; and I must even piece out what he had told me with my own poor inventions while Charlie wrote of the ways of bank-clerks.

I got together and placed on one file all my notes; and the net result was not cheering. I

read them a second time. There was nothing that might not have been compiled at second-hand from other people's books—except, perhaps, the story of the fight in the harbour. The adventures of a Viking had been written many times before; the history of a Greek galley-slave was no new thing, and though I wrote both, who could challenge or confirm the accuracy of my details? I might as well tell a tale of two thousand years hence. The Lords of Life and Death were as cunning as Grish Chunder had hinted. They would allow nothing to escape that might trouble or make easy the minds of men. Though I was convinced of this, yet I could not leave the tale alone. Exaltation followed reaction, not once, but twenty times in the next few weeks. My moods varied with the March sunlight and flying clouds. By night or in the beauty of a spring morning I perceived that I could write that tale and shift continents thereby. In the wet windy afternoons, I saw that the tale might indeed be written, but would be nothing more than a faked, false-varnished, sham-rusted piece of Wardour Street work at the end. Then I blessed Charlie in many ways—though it was no fault of his. He seemed to be busy with prize competitions, and I saw less and less of him as the weeks went by and the earth cracked and grew ripe to spring, and the buds swelled in their sheaths. He did not care to read or talk of

what he had read, and there was a new ring of self-assertion in his voice. I hardly cared to remind him of the galley when we met; but Charlie alluded to it on every occasion, always as a story from which money was to be made.

"I think I deserve twenty-five per cent., don't I, at least," he said, with beautiful frankness. "I supplied all the ideas, didn't I?"

This greediness for silver was a new side in his nature. I assumed that it had been developed in the City, where Charlie was picking up the curious nasal drawl of the underbred City man.

"When the thing's done we'll talk about it. I can't make anything of it at present. Red-haired or black-haired hero—they are equally difficult."

He was sitting by the fire staring at the red coals. "I can't understand what you find so difficult. It's all as clear as mud to me," he replied. A jet of gas puffed out between the bars, took light, and whistled softly. "Suppose we take the red-haired hero's adventures first, from the time that he came south to my galley and captured it and sailed to the Beaches."

I knew better now than to interrupt Charlie. I was out of reach of pen and paper, and dared not move to get them lest I should break the current. The gas-jet puffed and whinnied, Charlie's voice dropped almost to a whisper, and he told a tale of the sailing of an open galley to Furdurstrandi, of

sunsets on the open sea, seen under the curve of the one sail evening after evening when the galley's beak was notched into the centre of the sinking disc, and "we sailed by that, for we had no other guide," quoth Charlie. He spoke of a landing on an island and explorations in its woods, where the crew killed three men whom they found asleep under the pines. Their ghosts, Charlie said, followed the galley, swimming and choking in the water, and the crew cast lots and threw one of their number overboard as a sacrifice to the strange gods whom they had offended. Then they ate seaweed when their provisions failed, and their legs swelled, and their leader, the red-haired man, killed two rowers who mutinied, and after a year spent among the woods they set sail for their own country, and a wind that never failed carried them back so safely that they all slept at night. This and much more Charlie told. Sometimes the voice fell so low that I could not catch the words, though every nerve was on the strain. He spoke of their leader, the red-haired man, as a pagan speaks of his God; for it was he who cheered them and slew them impartially as he thought best for their needs; and it was he who steered them for three days among floating ice, each floe crowded with strange beasts that "tried to sail with us," said Charlie, "and we beat them back with the handles of the oars."

The gas-jet went out, a burnt coal gave way, and the fire settled with a tiny crash to the bottom of the grate. Charlie ceased speaking, and I said no word.

"By Jove!" he said at last, shaking his head. "I've been staring at the fire till I'm dizzy. What was I going to say?"

"Something about the galley-book."

"I remember now. It's a quarter of the profits, isn't it?"

"It's anything you like when I've done the tale."

"I wanted to be sure of that. I must go now. I've — I've an appointment." And he left me.

Had not my eyes been held, I might have known that that broken muttering over the fire was the swan-song of Charlie Mears. But I thought it the prelude to further revelation. At last and at last I should cheat the Lords of Life and Death!

When next Charlie came to me I received him with rapture. He was nervous and embarrassed, but his eyes were very full of light, and his lips a little parted.

"I've done a poem," he said, and then, quickly: "It's the best I've ever done. Read it." He thrust it into my hand and retreated to the window.

I groaned inwardly. It would be the work of

half an hour to criticise — that is to say, praise — the poem sufficiently to please Charlie. Then I had good reason to groan, for Charlie, discarding his favourite centipede metres, had launched into shorter and choppier verse, and verse with a motive at the back of it. This is what I read: —

"The day is most fair, the cheery wind
Halloos behind the hill
Where he bends the wood as seemeth good,
And the sapling to his will!
Riot, O wind; there is that in my blood
That would not have thee still!

"She gave me herself, O Earth, O Sky;
Gray sea, she is mine alone!
Let the sullen boulders hear my cry,
And rejoice tho' they be but stone!

"Mine! I have won her, O good brown earth,
Make merry! 'Tis hard on Spring;
Make merry; my love is doubly worth
All worship your fields can bring!
Let the hind that tills you feel my mirth
At the early harrowing."

"Yes, it's the early harrowing, past a doubt," I said, with a dread at my heart. Charlie smiled, but did not answer.

"Red cloud of the sunset, tell it abroad;
I am victor. Greet me, O Sun,
Dominant master and absolute lord
Over the soul of one!"

"Well?" said Charlie, looking over my shoulder.

I thought it far from well, and very evil indeed, when he silently laid a photograph on the paper —the photograph of a girl with a curly head and a foolish slack mouth.

"Isn't it — isn't it wonderful?" he whispered, pink to the tips of his ears, wrapped in the rosy mystery of first love. "I didn't know; I didn't think — it came like a thunderclap."

"Yes. It comes like a thunderclap. Are you very happy, Charlie?"

"My God — she — she loves me!" He sat down repeating the last words to himself. I looked at the hairless face, the narrow shoulders already bowed by desk-work, and wondered when, where, and how he had loved in his past lives.

"What will your mother say?" I asked cheerfully.

"I don't care a damn what she says."

At twenty the things for which one does not care a damn should, properly, be many, but one must not include mothers in the list. I told him this gently; and he described Her, even as Adam must have described to the newly-named beasts the glory and tenderness and beauty of Eve. Incidentally I learned that She was a tobacconist's assistant with a weakness for pretty dress, and had told him four or five times already that She had never been kissed by a man before.

Charlie spoke on and on, and on; while I, separated from him by thousands of years, was considering the beginnings of things. Now I understood why the Lords of Life and Death shut the doors so carefully behind us. It is that we may not remember our first and most beautiful woo-ings. Were it not so, our world would be without inhabitants in a hundred years.

"Now, about that galley-story," I said still more cheerfully, in a pause in the rush of the speech.

Charlie looked up as though he had been hit. "The galley—what galley? Good heavens, don't joke, man! This is serious! You don't know how serious it is!"

Grish Chunder was right. Charlie had tasted the love of woman that kills remembrance, and the finest story in the world would never be written.

BERTRAN AND BIMI

The orang-outang in the big iron cage lashed to the sheep-pen began the discussion. The night was stiflingly hot, and as I and Hans Breitmann, the big-beamed German, passed him, dragging our bedding to the fore-peak of the steamer, he roused himself and chattered obscenely. He had been caught somewhere in the Malayan Archipelago, and was going to England to be exhibited at a shilling a head. For four days he had struggled, yelled, and wrenched at the heavy bars of his prison without ceasing, and had nearly slain a lascar incautious enough to come within reach of the great hairy paw.

"It would be well for you, mine friend, if you was a liddle seasick," said Hans Breitmann, pausing by the cage. "You haf too much Ego in your Cosmos."

The orang-outang's arm slid out negligently from between the bars. No one would have believed that it would make a sudden snakelike rush at the German's breast. The thin silk of the sleeping-suit tore out; Hans stepped back unconcernedly to pluck a banana from a bunch hanging close to one of the boats.

"Too much Ego," said he, peeling the fruit and offering it to the caged devil, who was rending the silk to tatters.

Then we laid out our bedding in the bows among the sleeping lascars, to catch any breeze that the pace of the ship might give us. The sea was like smoky oil, except where it turned to fire under our forefoot and whirled back into the dark in smears of dull flame. There was a thunderstorm some miles away; we could see the glimmer of the lightning. The ship's cow, distressed by the heat and the smell of the ape-beast in the cage, lowed unhappily from time to time in exactly the same key as that in which the look-out man answered the hourly call from the bridge. The trampling tune of the engines was very distinct, and the jarring of the ash-lift, as it was tipped into the sea, hurt the procession of hushed noise. Hans lay down by my side and lighted a good-night cigar. This was naturally the beginning of conversation. He owned a voice as soothing as the wash of the sea, and stores of experiences as vast as the sea itself; for his business in life was to wander up and down the world, collecting orchids and wild beasts and ethnological specimens for German and American dealers. I watched the glowing end of his cigar wax and wane in the gloom, as the sentences rose and fell, till I was nearly asleep. The orang-outang, troubled by some dream

of the forests of his freedom, began to yell like a soul in purgatory, and to pluck madly at the bars of the cage.

"If he was out now dere would not be much of us left hereabout," said Hans lazily. "He screams goot. See, now, how I shall tame him when he stops himself."

There was a pause in the outcry, and from Hans' mouth came an imitation of a snake's hiss, so perfect that I almost sprang to my feet. The sustained murderous sound ran along the deck, and the wrenching at the bars ceased. The orang-outang was quaking in an ecstasy of pure terror.

"Dot stopped him," said Hans. "I learned dot trick in Mogoung Tanjong when I was collecting liddle monkeys for some peoples in Berlin. Efery one in der world is afraid of der monkeys — except der snake. So I blay snake against monkey, und he keep quite still. Dere was too much Ego in his Cosmos. Dot is der soul-custom of monkeys. Are you asleep, or will you listen, und I will tell a dale dot you shall not pelief?"

"There's no tale in the wide world that I can't believe," I said.

"If you haf learned pelief you haf learned somedings. Now I shall try your pelief. Goot! When I was collecting dose liddle monkeys — it was in '79 or 80, und I was in der islands of der Archipelago — over dere in der dark" — he pointed

southward to New Guinea generally — "Mein Gott! I would sooner collect life red devils than liddle monkeys. When dey do not bite off your thumbs dey are always dying from nostalgia — home-sick — for dey haf der imperfect soul, which is midway arrested in defelopment — und too much Ego. I was dere for nearly a year, und dere I found a man dot was called Bertran. He was a Frenchman, und he was goot man — naturalist to his bone. Dey said he was an escaped convict, but he was naturalist, und dot was enough for me. He would call all der life beasts from der forest, und dey would come. I said he was St. Francis of Assizi in a new dransmigration produced, und he laughed und said he haf never preach to der fishes. He sold dem for tripang — *bêche-de-mer*.

"Und dot man, who was king of beasts-tamer men, he had in der house shust such anoder as dot devil-animal in der cage — a great orang-outang dot thought he was a man. He haf found him when he was a child — der orang-outang — und he was child und brother und opera comique all round to Bertran. He had his room in dot house — not a cage, but a room — mit a bed und sheets, und he would go to bed und get up in der morning und smoke his cigar und eat his dinner mit Bertran, und walk mit him hand in hand, which was most horrible. Herr Gott! I haf seen dot beast throw himself back in his chair und laugh

when Bertran haf made fun of me. He was *not* a beast; he was a man, und he talked to Bertran, und Bertran comprehend, for I have seen dem. Und he was always politeful to me except when I talk too long to Bertran und say nodings at all to him. Den he would pull me away — dis great, dark devil, mit his enormous paws — shust as if I was a child. He was not a beast; he was a man. Dis I saw pefore I know him three months, und Bertran he haf saw the same; and Bimi, der orang-outang, haf understood us both, mit his cigar between his big dog-teeth und der blue gum.

"I was dere a year, dere und at der oder islands — somedimes for monkeys und somedimes for butterflies und orchits. One time Bertran says to me dot he will be married, because he haf found a girl dot was goot, und he enquire if dis marrying idee was right. I would not say, pecause it was not me dot was going to be married. Den he go off courting der girl — she was a half-caste French girl — very pretty. Haf you got a new light for my cigar? Ouf! Very pretty. Only I say, 'Haf you thought of Bimi? If he pull me away when I talk to you, what will he do to your wife? He will pull her in pieces. If I was you, Bertran, I would gif my wife for wedding-present der stuff figure of Bimi.' By dot time I had learned somedings about der monkey peoples. 'Shoot him?' says Bertran. 'He is

your beast,' I said; 'if he was mine he would be shot now!'

"Den I felt at der back of my neck der fingers of Bimi. Mein Gott! I tell you dot he talked through dose fingers. It was der deaf-and-dumb alphabet all gomplete. He slide his hairy arm round my neck, und he tilt up my chin und look into my face, shust to see if I understood his talk so well as he understood mine.

"'See now dere!' says Bertran, 'und you would shoot him while he is cuddlin' you? Dot is der Teuton ingrate!'

"But I knew dot I had made Bimi a life's-enemy, pecause his fingers haf talk murder through the back of my neck. Next dime I see Bimi dere was a pistol in my belt, und he touch it once, und I open der breech to show him it was loaded. He haf seen der liddle monkeys killed in der woods: he understood.

"So Bertran he was married, und he forgot clean about Bimi dot was skippin' alone on der beach mit der half of a human soul in his belly. I was see him skip, und he took a big bough und thrash der sand till he haf made a great hole like a grave. So I says to Bertran, 'For any sakes, kill Bimi. He is mad mit der jealousy.'

"Bertran haf said, 'He is not mad at all. He haf obey und lofe my wife, und if she speak he will get her slippers,' und he looked at

his wife agross der room. She was a very pretty girl.

"Den I said to him, 'Dost dou pretend to know monkeys und dis beast dot is lashing himself mad upon der sands pecause you do not talk to him? Shoot him when he comes to der house, for he haf der light in his eye dot means killing — und killing.' Bimi come to der house, but dere was no light in his eye. It was all put away, cunning — so cunning — und he fetch der girl her slippers, und Bertran turn to me und say, 'Dost dou know him in nine months more dan I haf known him in twelve years? Shall a child stab his fader? I haf fed him, und he was my child. Do not speak dis nonsense to my wife or to me any more.'

"Dot next day Bertran came to my house to help me make some wood cases for der specimens, und he tell me dot he haf left his wife a liddle while mit Bimi in der garden. Den I finish my cases quick, und I say, 'Let us go to your houses und get a trink.' He laugh and say, 'Come along, dry mans.'

"His wife was not in der garden, und Bimi did not come when Bertran called. Und his wife did not come when he called, und he knocked at her bedroom door und dot was shut tight — locked. Den he look at me, und his face was white. I broke down der door mit my shoulder, und der thatch of der roof was torn into a great hole, und der sun

came in upon der floor. Haf you ever seen paper in der waste-basket, or cards at whist on der table scattered? Dere was no wife dot could be seen. I tell you dere was nodings in dot room dot might be a woman. Dere was stuff on der floor, und dot was all. I looked at dese things und I was very sick; but Bertran looked a liddle longer at what was upon the floor und der walls, und der hole in der thatch. Den he pegan to laugh, soft und low, und I knew und thank Gott dot he was mad. He nefer cried, he nefer prayed. He stood all still in der doorway und laugh to himself. Den he said, 'She haf locked herself in dis room, and he haf torn up der thatch. *Fi donc!* Dot is so. We will mend der thatch und wait for Bimi. He will surely come.'

"I dell you we waited ten days in dot house, after der room was made into a room again, und once or twice we saw Bimi comin' a liddle way from der woods. He was afraid pecause he haf done wrong. Bertran called him when he vas come to look on the tenth day, und Bimi come skipping along der beach und making noises mit a long piece of black hair in his hands. Den Bertran laugh and say, '*Fi donc!*' shust as if it was a glass broken upon der table; und Bimi come nearer, und Bertran was honey-sweet in his voice und laughed to himself. For three days he made love to Bimi, pecause Bimi would not let

himself be touched. Den Bimi come to dinner at der same table mit us, und der hair on his hands was all black und thick mit — mit what had dried on der hands. Bertran gave him sangaree till Bimi vas drunk und stupid, und den——"

Hans paused to puff at his cigar.

"And then?" said I.

"Und den Bertran he kill him mit his hands, und I go for a walk upon der beach. It vas Bertran's own piziness. When I come back der ape he was dead, und Bertran he was dying abofe him; but still he laughed liddle und low und he was quite content. Now you know der formula of der strength of der orang-outang — it is more as seven to one in relation to man. But Bertran, he haf killed Bimi mit sooch dings as Gott gif him. Dot was der miracle."

The infernal clamour in the cage recommenced. "Aha! Dot friend of ours haf still too much Ego in his Cosmos. Be quiet, dou!"

Hans hissed long and venomously. We could hear the great beast quaking in his cage.

"But why in the world didn't you help Bertran instead of letting him be killed?" I asked.

"My friend," said Hans, composedly stretching himself to slumber, "it was not nice even to mineself dot I should live after I haf seen dot room mit der hole in der thatch. Und Bertran, he was her husband. Goot-night, und — sleep well."

REINGELDER AND THE GERMAN FLAG

HANS BREITMANN paddled across the deck in his pink pyjamas, a cup of tea in one hand and a cheroot in the other, when the steamer was sweltering down the coast on her way to Singapur. He drank beer all day and all night, and played a game called "Scairt" with three compatriots.

"I haf washed," said he in a voice of thunder, "but dere is no use washing on dese hell-seas. Look at me — I am still all wet und schweatin'. It is der tea dot makes me so. Boy, bring me Bilsener on ice."

"You will die if you drink beer before breakfast," said one man. "Beer is the worst thing in the world for ——"

"Ya, I know — der liver. I haf no liver, und I shall not die. At least I will not die obon dese benny sdeamers dot haf no beer fit to trink. If I should haf died, I will haf done so a hoondert dimes before now — in Shermany, in New York, in Japon, in Assam, und all over der inside barts of South Amerique. Also in Shamaica should I haf died, or in Siam, but I am here; und dere are my orchits dot I have drafelled all the vorld round to find."

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He pointed towards the wheel, where, in two rough wooden boxes, lay a mass of shrivelled vegetation, supposed by all the ship to represent Assam orchids of fabulous value.

Now, orchids do not grow in the main streets of towns, and Hans Breitmann had gone far to get his. There was nothing that he had not collected that year, from king-crabs to white kangaroos.

"Lisden, now," said he, after he had been speaking for not much more than ten minutes without a pause; "lisden und I will dell you a sdory to show how bad und worse it is to go gollectin' und belief vot anoder fool haf said. Dis was in Uraguay which was in Amerique — North or Sout' you would not know — und I was hoontin' orchits und aferydings else dot I could back in my kanasters — dot is drafelling sbecimen-gaces. Dere vas den mit me anoder man — Reingelder, dot vas his name — und he vas hoontin' also, but only coral-snakes — joost Uraguay coral-snakes — afery-kind you could imagine. I dell you a coral-snake is a peauty — all red und white like coral dot has been gestrung in bands upon der neck of a girl. Dere is one snake howefer dot we who gollect know ash der Sherman Flag, pecause id is red und plack und white, joost like a sausage mit druffles. Reingelder he was naturalist — goot man — goot trinker — better as me! 'By Gott,' said Reingelder, 'I will get a Sherman Flag

snake or I will die.' Und we toorned all Uraguay upside-behint all pecause of dot Sherman Flag.

"Von day when we was in none knows where — shwingin' in our hummocks among der woods, oop comes a natif woman mit a Sherman Flag in a bickle-bottle — my bickle-bottle — und we both fell from our hummocks flat ubon our pot — what you call stomach — mit shoy at dis thing. Now I was gollectin' orchits also, und I knowed dot der idee of life to Reingelder vas dis Sherman Flag. Derefore I bicked myselfs oop und I said, 'Reingelder, dot is *your* find.' — 'Heart's true friend, dou art a goot man,' said Reingelder, und mit dot he obens der bickle-bottle, und der natif woman she shqueals. 'Herr Gott! It will bite.' I said — pecause in Uraguay a man must be careful of der insects — 'Reingelder, shpifligate her in der alcohol und den she will be all right.' — 'Nein,' said Reingelder, 'I will der snake alife examine. Dere is no fear. Der coral-snakes are mitout shting-apparatus brofided.' Boot I looked at her het, und she vas der het of a boison-snake — der true viper cranium, narrow und contract. 'It is not goot,' said I; 'she may bite, und den — we are tree hoondert mile from aferywheres. Broduce der alcohol und bickle him alife.' Reingelder he had him in his hand — grawlin' und grawlin' as slow as a woorm und dwice as guiet. 'Nonsense,' says Reingelder. 'Yates haf said dot

not von of der coral-snakes haf der sack of boison.' Yates vas der crate authorité ubon der reptilia of Sout' Amerique. He haf written a book. You do not know, of course, but he vas a crate authorité.

"I gum my eye upon der Sherman Flag, grawlin' und grawlin' in Reingelder's fist, und der het vas not der het of innocence. 'Mein Gott,' I said. 'It is you dot will get der sack — der sack from dis life here pelow!'

"'Den you may haf der snake,' says Reingelder, pattin' it ubon her het. 'See now, I will show you vat Yates haf written!'

"Und mit dot he went indo his dent, und brung out his big book of Yates; der Sherman Flag grawlin' in his fist. 'Yates haf said,' said Reingelder, und he throwed oben der book in der fork of his fist und read der passage, proofin' conglusivement dot nefer coral-snake bite vas boison. Den he shut der book mit a bang, und dot shqueeze der Sherman Flag, und she nip once und dwice.

"'Der liddle fool he haf bit me,' says Reingelder.

"Dese things was before we know apout der permanganat-potash injection. I was discomfordable."

"'Die oop der arm, Reingelder,' said I, 'und trink whiskey ontil you can no more trink.'

"'Trink ten tousand tevils! I will go to dinner,' said Reingelder, und he put her afay, und it vas very red mit emotion.

"We lifed upon soup, horse-flesh, und beans for dinner, but before we vas eaten der soup, Reingelder he haf hold of his arm und cry, 'It is genumben to der clavicle. I am a dead man; und Yates he haf lied in brint!'

"I dell you it vas most sad, for der symbtoms dot came vas all dose of strychnine. He vas doubled into big knots, und den undoubled, und den redoubled mooch worse dan pefore, und he frothed. I vas mit him, saying, 'Reingelder, dost dou know me?' but he himself, der inward gonsciousness part, was peyond knowledge, und so I know he vas not in bain. Den he wrop himself oop in von dremendous knot und den he died —all alone mit me in Uraguay. I was sorry, for I lofed Reingelder, und I puried him, und den I took der coral-snake — dot Sherman Flag — so bad und dreacherous, und I bickled him alife.

"So I got him: und so I lost Reingelder."

OF THOSE CALLED

We were wallowing through the China Seas in a dense fog, the horn blowing every two minutes for the benefit of the fishery craft that crowded the waterways. From the bridge the fo'c'sle was invisible; from the hand-wheel at the stern, the captain's cabin. The fog held possession of everything — the pearly white fog. Once or twice when it tried to lift we saw a glimpse of the oily sea, the flitting vision of a junk's sail spread in the vain hope of catching the breeze, or the buoys of a line of nets. Somewhere close to us lay the land, but it might have been the Kurile Islands for aught we knew. Very early in the morning there passed us, not a cable's-length away, but as unseen as the spirits of the dead, a steamer of the same line as ours. She howled melodiously in answer to our bellowing, and passed on.

"Suppose she had hit us," said a man from Saigon. "Then we should have gone down," answered the chief officer sweetly. "Beastly thing to go down in a fog," said a young gentleman who was travelling for pleasure. "Chokes a

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man both ways, y' know." We were comfortably gathered in the smoking-room, the weather being too cold to venture on the deck. Conversation naturally turned upon accidents of fog, the horn tooting significantly in the pauses between the tales. I heard of the wreck of the *Eric*, the cutting down of the *Strathnairn* within half a mile of harbour, and the carrying away of the bow-plates of the *Sigismund* outside Sandy Hook.

"It is astonishing," said the man from Saigon, "how many true stories are put down as sea yarns. It makes a man almost shrink from telling an anecdote."

"Oh, please don't shrink on our account," said the smoking-room with one voice.

"It's not my own story," said the man from Saigon. "A fellow on a Messageries boat told it me. He had been third officer of a sort on a Geordie tramp — one of those lumbering, dish-bottomed coal-barges where the machinery is tied up with a string and the plates are rivetted with putty. The way he told his tale was this. The tramp had been creeping along some sea or other with a chart ten years old and the haziest sort of chronometers when she got into a fog — just such a fog as we have now."

Here the smoking-room turned round as one man, and looked through the windows.

"In the man's own words, 'Just when the fog

was thickest, the engines broke down. They had been doing this for some weeks, and we were too weary to care. I went forward of the bridge, and leaned over the side, wondering where I should ever get something that I could call a ship, and whether the old hulk would fall to pieces as she lay. The fog was as thick as any London one, but as white as steam. While they were tinkering at the engines below, I heard a voice in the fog about twenty yards from the ship's side, calling out, "Can you climb on board if we throw you a rope?" That startled me, because I fancied we were going to be run down the next minute by a ship engaged in rescuing a man overboard. I shouted for the engine-room whistle; and it whistled about five minutes, but never the sound of a ship could we hear. The ship's boy came forward with some biscuit for me. As he put it into my hand, I heard the voice in the fog crying out about throwing us a rope. This time it was the boy that yelled, "Ship on us!" and off went the whistle again, while the men in the engine-room—it generally took the ship's crew to repair the *Hespa's* engines—tumbled upon deck to know what we were doing. I told them about the hail, and we listened in the smother of the fog for the sound of a screw. We listened for ten minutes, then we blew the whistle for another ten. Then the crew began to call the ship's boy a fool,

meaning that the third mate was no better. When they were going down below, I heard the hail the third time, so did the ship's boy. "There you are," I said; "it is not twenty yards from us." The engineer sings out, "I heard it too! Are you all asleep?" Then the crew began to swear at the engineer; and what with discussion, argument, and a little swearing,—for there is not much discipline on board a tramp,—we raised such a row that our skipper came aft to enquire. I, the engineer, and the ship's boy stuck to our tale. "Voices or no voices," said the captain, "you'd better patch the old engines up, and see if you've got enough steam to whistle with. I've a notion that we've got into rather too crowded ways."

"'The engineer stayed on deck while the men went down below. The skipper hadn't got back to the chart-room before I saw thirty feet of bowsprit hanging over the break of the fo'c'sle. Thirty feet of bowsprit, sir, doesn't belong to anything that sails the seas except a sailing-ship or a man-of-war. I speculated quite a long time, with my hands on the bulwarks, as to whether our friend was soft wood or steel-plated. It would not have made much difference to us, anyway; but I felt there was more honour in being rammed, you know. Then I knew all about it. It was a ram. We opened out. I am not exaggerating—we opened out, sir, like a cardboard box. The other ship cut

us two-thirds through, a little behind the break of the fo'c'sle. Our decks split up lengthways. The mizzen-mast bounded out of its place, and we heeled over. Then the other ship blew a foghorn. I remember thinking, as I took water from the port bulwark, that this was rather ostentatious after she had done all the mischief. After that, I was a mile and a half under sea, trying to go to sleep as hard as I could. Some one caught hold of my hair, and waked me up. I was hanging to what was left of one of our boats under the lee of a large English ironclad. There were two men with me; the three of us began to yell. A man on the ship sings out, "Can you climb on board if we throw you a rope?" They weren't going to let down a fine new man-of-war's boat to pick up three half-drowned rats. We accepted the invitation. We climbed—I, the engineer, and the ship's boy. About half an hour later the fog cleared entirely; except for the half of the boat away in the offing, there was neither stick nor string on the sea to show that the *Hespa* had been cut down.'

"And what do you think of that now?" said the man from Saigon.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Your Gods and my Gods — do you or I know which are the stronger?—*Native Proverb.*

East of Suez, some hold, the direct control of Providence ceases; Man being there handed over to the power of the Gods and Devils of Asia, and the Church of England Providence only exercising an occasional and modified supervision in the case of Englishmen.

This theory accounts for some of the more unnecessary horrors of life in India: it may be stretched to explain my story.

My friend Strickland of the Police, who knows as much of natives of India as is good for any man, can bear witness to the facts of the case. Dumoise, our doctor, also saw what Strickland and I saw. The inference which he drew from the evidence was entirely incorrect. He is dead now; he died in a rather curious manner, which has been elsewhere described.

When Fleete came to India he owned a little money and some land in the Himalayas, near a place called Dharmsala. Both properties had been left him by an uncle, and he came out to

finance them. He was a big, heavy, genial, and inoffensive man. His knowledge of natives was, of course, limited, and he complained of the difficulties of the language.

He rode in from his place in the hills to spend New Year in the station, and he stayed with Strickland. On New Year's Eve there was a big dinner at the club, and the night was excusably wet. When men foregather from the uttermost ends of the Empire, they have a right to be riotous. The Frontier had sent down a contingent o' Catch-'em-Alive-O's who had not seen twenty white faces for a year, and were used to ride fifteen miles to dinner at the next Fort at the risk of a Khyberee bullet where their drinks should lie. They profited by their new security, for they tried to play pool with a curled-up hedgehog found in the garden, and one of them carried the marker round the room in his teeth. Half a dozen planters had come in from the south and were talking "horse" to the Biggest Liar in Asia, who was trying to cap all their stories at once. Everybody was there, and there was a general closing up of ranks and taking stock of our losses in dead or disabled that had fallen during the past year. It was a very wet night, and I remember that we sang "Auld Lang Syne" with our feet in the Polo Championship Cup, and our heads among the stars, and swore that we were all dear

friends. Then some of us went away and annexed Burma, and some tried to open up the Soudan and were opened up by Fuzzies in that cruel scrub outside Suakim, and some found stars and medals, and some were married, which was bad, and some did other things which were worse, and the others of us stayed in our chains and strove to make money on insufficient experiences.

Fleete began the night with sherry and bitters, drank champagne steadily up to dessert, then raw, rasping Capri with all the strength of whiskey, took Benedictine with his coffee, four or five whiskies and sodas to improve his pool strokes, beer and bones at half-past two, winding up with old brandy. Consequently, when he came out, at half-past three in the morning, into fourteen degrees of frost, he was very angry with his horse for coughing, and tried to leapfrog into the saddle. The horse broke away and went to his stables; so Strickland and I formed a Guard of Dishonour to take Fleete home.

Our road lay through the bazar, close to a little temple of Hanuman, the Monkey-god, who is a leading divinity worthy of respect. All gods have good points, just as have all priests. Personally, I attach much importance to Hanuman, and am kind to his people — the great gray apes of the hills. One never knows when one may want a friend.

There was a light in the temple, and as we passed we could hear voices of men chanting hymns. In a native temple the priests rise at all hours of the night to do honour to their god. Before we could stop him, Fleete dashed up the steps, patted two priests on the back, and was gravely grinding the ashes of his cigar-butt into the forehead of the red stone image of Hanuman. Strickland tried to drag him out, but he sat down and said solemnly:

"Shee that? 'Mark of the B-beasht! *I* made it. Ishn't it fine?"

In half a minute the temple was alive and noisy, and Strickland, who knew what came of polluting gods, said that things might occur. He, by virtue of his official position, long residence in the country, and weakness for going among the natives, was known to the priests, and he felt unhappy. Fleete sat on the ground and refused to move. He said that "good old Hanuman" made a very soft pillow.

Then, without any warning, a Silver Man came out of a recess behind the image of the god. He was perfectly naked in that bitter, bitter cold, and his body shone like frosted silver, for he was what the Bible calls "a leper as white as snow." Also he had no face, because he was a leper of some years' standing, and his disease was heavy upon him. We two stooped to haul Fleete up, and

the temple was filling and filling with folk who seemed to spring from the earth, when the Silver Man ran in under our arms, making a noise exactly like the mewing of an otter, caught Fleete round the body and dropped his head on Fleete's breast before we could wrench him away. Then he retired to a corner and sat mewing while the crowd blocked all the doors.

The priests were very angry until the Silver Man touched Fleete. That nuzzling seemed to sober them.

At the end of a few minutes' silence one of the priests came to Strickland and said, in perfect English, "Take your friend away. He has done with Hanuman, but Hanuman has not done with him." The crowd gave room and we carried Fleete into the road.

Strickland was very angry. He said that we might all three have been knifed, and that Fleete should thank his stars that he had escaped without injury.

Fleete thanked no one. He said that he wanted to go to bed. He was gorgeously drunk.

We moved on, Strickland silent and wrathful, until Fleete was taken with violent shivering fits and sweating. He said that the smells of the bazar were overpowering, and he wondered why slaughter-houses were permitted so near English residences. "Can't you smell the blood?" said Fleete.

We put him to bed at last, just as the dawn was breaking, and Strickland invited me to have another whiskey and soda. While we were drinking he talked of the trouble in the temple, and admitted that it baffled him completely. Strickland hates being mystified by natives, because his business in life is to overmatch them with their own weapons. He has not yet succeeded in doing this, but in fifteen or twenty years he will have made some small progress.

"They should have mauled us," he said, "instead of mewing at us. I wonder what they meant. I don't like it one little bit."

I said that the Managing Committee of the temple would in all probability bring a criminal action against us for insulting their religion. There was a section of the Indian Penal Code which exactly met Fleete's offence. Strickland said he only hoped and prayed that they would do this. Before I left I looked into Fleete's room, and saw him lying on his right side, scratching his left breast. Then I went to bed, cold, depressed, and unhappy at seven o'clock in the morning.

At one o'clock I rode over to Strickland's house to inquire after Fleete's head. I imagined that it would be a sore one. Fleete was breakfasting and seemed unwell. His temper was gone, for he was abusing the cook for not supplying him with an underdone chop. A man who can eat raw meat

after a wet night is a curiosity. I told Fleete this, and he laughed.

"You breed queer mosquitoes in these parts," he said. "I've been bitten to pieces, but only in one place."

"Let's have a look at the bite," said Strickland. "It may have gone down since this morning."

While the chops were being cooked, Fleete opened his shirt and showed us, just over his left breast, a mark, the perfect double of the black rosettes — the five or six irregular blotches arranged in a circle — on a leopard's hide. Strickland looked and said, "It was only pink this morning. It's grown black now."

Fleete ran to a glass.

"By Jove!" he said, "this is nasty. What is it?"

We could not answer. Here the chops came in, all red and juicy, and Fleete bolted three in a most offensive manner. He ate on his right grinders only, and threw his head over his right shoulder as he snapped the meat. When he had finished, it struck him that he had been behaving strangely, for he said apologetically, "I don't think I ever felt so hungry in my life. I've bolted like an ostrich."

After breakfast Strickland said to me, "Don't go. Stay here, and stay for the night."

Seeing that my house was not three miles from

Strickland's, this request was absurd. But Strickland insisted, and was going to say something when Fleete interrupted by declaring in a shamefaced way that he felt hungry again. Strickland sent a man to my house to fetch over my bedding and a horse, and we three went down to Strickland's stables to pass the hours until it was time to go out for a ride. The man who has a weakness for horses never wearies of inspecting them; and when two men are killing time in this way they gather knowledge and lies the one from the other.

There were five horses in the stables, and I shall never forget the scene as we tried to look them over. They seemed to have gone mad. They reared and screamed and nearly tore up their pickets; they sweated and shivered and lathered and were distraught with fear. Strickland's horses used to know him as well as his dogs; which made the matter more curious. We left the stable for fear of the brutes throwing themselves in their panic. Then Strickland turned back and called me. The horses were still frightened, but they let us "gentle" and make much of them, and put their heads in our bosoms.

"They aren't afraid of *us*," said Strickland. "D'you know, I'd give three months' pay if Outrage here could talk."

But Outrage was dumb, and could only cuddle

up to his master and blow out his nostrils, as is the custom of horses when they wish to explain things but can't. Fleete came up when we were in the stalls, and as soon as the horses saw him their fright broke out afresh. It was all that we could do to escape from the place unkicked. Strickland said, "They don't seem to love you, Fleete."

"Nonsense," said Fleete; "my mare will follow me like a dog." He went to her; she was in a loose-box; but as he slipped the bars she plunged, knocked him down, and broke away into the garden. I laughed, but Strickland was not amused. He took his moustache in both fists and pulled at it till it nearly came out. Fleete, instead of going off to chase his property, yawned, saying that he felt sleepy. He went to the house to lie down, which was a foolish way of spending New Year's Day.

Strickland sat with me in the stables and asked if I had noticed anything peculiar in Fleete's manner. I said that he ate his food like a beast; but that this might have been the result of living alone in the hills out of the reach of society as refined and elevating as ours, for instance. Strickland was not amused. I do not think that he listened to me, for his next sentence referred to the mark on Fleete's breast, and I said that it might have been caused by blister-flies, or that it was possibly a

birth-mark newly born and now visible for the first time. We both agreed that it was unpleasant to look at, and Strickland found occasion to say that I was a fool.

"I can't tell you what I think now," said he, "because you would call me a madman; but you must stay with me for the next few days, if you can. I want you to watch Fleete, but don't tell me what you think till I have made up my mind."

"But I am dining out to-night," I said.

"So am I," said Strickland, "and so is Fleete. At least if he doesn't change his mind."

We walked about the garden smoking, but saying nothing — because we were friends, and talking spoils good tobacco — till our pipes were out. Then we went to wake up Fleete. He was wide awake and fidgeting about his room.

"I say, I want some more chops," he said. "Can I get them?"

We laughed and said, "Go and change. The ponies will be round in a minute."

"All right," said Fleete. "I'll go when I get the chops — underdone ones, mind."

He seemed to be quite in earnest. It was four o'clock, and we had had breakfast at one; still, for a long time, he demanded those underdone chops. Then he changed into riding clothes and went out into the verandah. His pony — the mare had not been caught — would not let him

come near. All three horses were unmanageable — mad with fear — and finally Fleete said that he would stay at home and get something to eat. Strickland and I rode out wondering. As we passed the temple of Hanuman, the Silver Man came out and mewed at us.

"He is not one of the regular priests of the temple," said Strickland. "I think I should peculiarly like to lay my hands on him."

There was no spring in our gallop on the race-course that evening. The horses were stale, and moved as though they had been ridden out.

"The fright after breakfast has been too much for them," said Strickland.

That was the only remark he made through the remainder of the ride. Once or twice I think he swore to himself; but that did not count.

We came back in the dark at seven o'clock, and saw that there were no lights in the bungalow. "Careless ruffians my servants are!" said Strickland.

My horse reared at something on the carriage-drive, and Fleete stood up under its nose.

"What are you doing, grovelling about the garden?" said Strickland.

But both horses bolted and nearly threw us. We dismounted by the stables and returned to Fleete, who was on his hands and knees under the orange-bushes.

"What the devil's wrong with you?" said Strickland.

"Nothing, nothing in the world," said Fleete, speaking very quickly and thickly. "I've been gardening — botanising, you know. The smell of the earth is delightful. I think I'm going for a walk — a long walk — all night."

Then I saw that there was something excessively out of order somewhere, and I said to Strickland, "I am not dining out."

"Bless you!" said Strickland. "Here, Fleete, get up. You'll catch fever there. Come in to dinner and let's have the lamps lit. We'll all dine at home."

Fleete stood up unwillingly, and said, "No lamps — no lamps. It's much nicer here. Let's dine outside and have some more chops — lots of 'em and underdone — bloody ones with gristle."

Now a December evening in Northern India is bitterly cold, and Fleete's suggestion was that of a maniac.

"Come in," said Strickland sternly. "Come in at once."

Fleete came, and when the lamps were brought, we saw that he was literally plastered with dirt from head to foot. He must have been rolling in the garden. He shrank from the light and went to his room. His eyes were horrible to look at. There was a green light behind them, not in

them, if you understand, and the man's lower lip hung down.

Strickland said, "There is going to be trouble — big trouble — to-night. Don't you change your riding-things."

We waited and waited for Fleete's reappearance, and ordered dinner in the meantime. We could hear him moving about his own room, but there was no light there. Presently from the room came the long-drawn howl of a wolf.

People write and talk lightly of blood running cold and hair standing up and things of that kind. Both sensations are too horrible to be trifled with. My heart stopped as though a knife had been driven through it, and Strickland turned as white as the tablecloth.

The howl was repeated, and was answered by another howl far across the fields.

That set the gilded roof on the horror. Strickland dashed into Fleete's room. I followed, and we saw Fleete getting out of the window. He made beast-noises in the back of his throat. He could not answer us when we shouted at him. He spat.

I don't quite remember what followed, but I think that Strickland must have stunned him with the long boot-jack or else I should never have been able to sit on his chest. Fleete could not speak, he could only snarl, and his snarls were

those of a wolf, not of a man. The human spirit must have been giving way all day and have died out with the twilight. We were dealing with a beast that had once been Fleete.

The affair was beyond any human and rational experience. I tried to say "Hydrophobia," but the word wouldn't come, because I knew that I was lying.

We bound this beast with leather thongs of the punkah-rope, and tied its thumbs and big toes together, and gagged it with a shoe-horn, which makes a very efficient gag if you know how to arrange it. Then we carried it into the dining-room, and sent a man to Dumoise, the doctor, telling him to come over at once. After we had despatched the messenger and were drawing breath, Strickland said, "It's no good. This isn't any doctor's work." I, also, knew that he spoke the truth.

The beast's head was free, and it threw it about from side to side. Any one entering the room would have believed that we were curing a wolf's pelt. That was the most loathsome accessory of all.

Strickland sat with his chin in the heel of his fist, watching the beast as it wriggled on the ground, but saying nothing. The shirt had been torn open in the scuffle and showed the black rosette mark on the left breast. It stood out like a blister.

In the silence of the watching we heard something without mewing like a she-otter. We both rose to our feet, and, I answer for myself, not Strickland, felt sick—actually and physically sick. We told each other, as did the men in "Pinafore," that it was the cat.

Dumoise arrived, and I never saw a little man so unprofessionally shocked. He said that it was a heart-rending case of hydrophobia, and that nothing could be done. At least any palliative measures would only prolong the agony. The beast was foaming at the mouth. Fleete, as we told Dumoise, had been bitten by dogs once or twice. Any man who keeps half a dozen terriers must expect a nip now and again. Dumoise could offer no help. He could only certify that Fleete was dying of hydrophobia. The beast was then howling, for it had managed to spit out the shoe-horn. Dumoise said that he would be ready to certify to the cause of death, and that the end was certain. He was a good little man, and he offered to remain with us; but Strickland refused the kindness. He did not wish to poison Dumoise's New Year. He would only ask him not to give the real cause of Fleete's death to the public.

So Dumoise left, deeply agitated; and as soon as the noise of the cart-wheels had died away, Strickland told me, in a whisper, his suspicions.

They were so wildly improbable that he dared not say them out aloud; and I, who entertained all Strickland's beliefs, was so ashamed of owning to them that I pretended to disbelieve.

"Even if the Silver Man had bewitched Fleete for polluting the image of Hanuman, the punishment could not have fallen so quickly."

As I was whispering this the cry outside the house rose again, and the beast fell into a fresh paroxysm of struggling till we were afraid that the thongs that held it would give way.

"Watch!" said Strickland. "If this happens six times I shall take the law into my own hands. I order you to help me."

He went into his room and came out in a few minutes with the barrels of an old shot-gun, a piece of fishing-line, some thick cord, and his heavy wooden bedstead. I reported that the convulsions had followed the cry by two seconds in each case, and the beast seemed perceptibly weaker.

Strickland muttered, "But he can't take away the life! He can't take away the life!"

I said, though I knew that I was arguing against myself, "It may be a cat. It must be a cat. If the Silver Man is responsible, why does he dare to come here?"

Strickland arranged the wood on the hearth, put the gun-barrels into the glow of the fire, spread the twine on the table, and broke a walking-stick

in two. There was one yard of fishing-line, gut, lapped with wire, such as is used for *mahseer*-fishing, and he tied the two ends together in a loop.

Then he said, "How can we catch him? He must be taken alive and unhurt."

I said that we must trust in Providence, and go out softly with polo-sticks into the shrubbery at the front of the house. The man or animal that made the cry was evidently moving round the house as regularly as a night-watchman. We could wait in the bushes till he came by, and knock him over.

Strickland accepted this suggestion, and we slipped out from a bath-room window into the front verandah and then across the carriage-drive into the bushes.

In the moonlight we could see the leper coming round the corner of the house. He was perfectly naked, and from time to time he mewed and stopped to dance with his shadow. It was an unattractive sight, and thinking of poor Fleete, brought to such degradation by so foul a creature, I put away all my doubts and resolved to help Strickland from the heated gun-barrels to the loop of twine—from the loins to the head and back again—with all tortures that might be needful.

The leper halted in the front porch for a moment and we jumped out on him with the sticks. He was wonderfully strong, and we were afraid

that he might escape or be fatally injured before we caught him. We had an idea that lepers were frail creatures, but this proved to be incorrect. Strickland knocked his legs from under him, and I put my foot on his neck. He mewed hideously, and even through my riding-boots I could feel that his flesh was not the flesh of a clean man.

He struck at us with his hand and feet-stumps. We looped the lash of a dog-whip round him, under the arm-pits, and dragged him backwards into the hall and so into the dining-room where the beast lay. There we tied him with trunk-straps. He made no attempt to escape, but mewed.

When we confronted him with the beast the scene was beyond description. The beast doubled backwards into a bow, as though he had been poisoned with strychnine, and moaned in the most pitiable fashion. Several other things happened also, but they cannot be put down here.

"I think I was right," said Strickland. "Now we will ask him to cure this case."

But the leper only mewed. Strickland wrapped a towel round his hand and took the gun-barrels out of the fire. I put the half of the broken walking-stick through the loop of fishing-line and buckled the leper comfortably to Strickland's bedstead. I understood then how men and women and little children can endure to see a witch burnt alive; for the beast was moaning on the floor, and though

the Silver Man had no face, you could see horrible feelings passing through the slab that took its place, exactly as waves of heat play across red-hot iron — gun-barrels for instance.

Strick'and shaded his eyes with his hands for a moment, and we got to work. This part is not to be printed.

. . . . . .

The dawn was beginning to break when the leper spoke. His mewings had not been satisfactory up to that point. The beast had fainted from exhaustion, and the house was very still. We unstrapped the leper and told him to take away the evil spirit. He crawled to the beast and laid his hand upon the left breast. That was all. Then he fell face down and whined, drawing in his breath as he did so.

We watched the face of the beast, and saw the soul of Fleete coming back into the eyes. Then a sweat broke out on the forehead, and the eyes — they were human eyes — closed. We waited for an hour, but Fleete still slept. We carried him to his room and bade the leper go, giving him the bedstead, and the sheet on the bedstead to cover his nakedness, the gloves and the towels with which we had touched him, and the whip that had been hooked round his body. He put the sheet about him and went out into the early morning without speaking or mewing.

Strickland wiped his face and sat down. A night-gong, far away in the city, made seven o'clock.

"Exactly four-and-twenty hours!" said Strickland. "And I've done enough to ensure my dismissal from the service, besides permanent quarters in a lunatic asylum. Do you believe that we are awake?"

The red-hot gun-barrel had fallen on the floor and was singeing the carpet. The smell was entirely real.

That morning at eleven we two together went to wake up Fleete. We looked and saw that the black leopard-rosette on his chest had disappeared. He was very drowsy and tired, but as soon as he saw us, he said, "Oh! Confound you fellows. Happy New Year to you. Never mix your liquors. I'm nearly dead."

"Thanks for your kindness, but you're over time," said Strickland. "To-day is the morning of the second. You've slept the clock round with a vengeance."

The door opened, and little Dumoise put his head in. He had come on foot, and fancied that we were laying out Fleete.

"I've brought a nurse," said Dumoise. "I suppose that she can come in for . . . what is necessary."

"By all means," said Fleete cheerily, sitting up in bed. "Bring on your nurses."

Dumoise was dumb. Strickland led him out and explained that there must have been a mistake in the diagnosis. Dumoise remained dumb and left the house hastily. He considered that his professional reputation had been injured, and was inclined to make a personal matter of the recovery. Strickland went out too. When he came back, he said that he had been to call on the temple of Hanuman to offer redress for the pollution of the god, and had been solemnly assured that no white man had ever touched the idol, and that he was an incarnation of all the virtues laboring under a delusion. "What do you think?" said Strickland.

I said, "There are more things . . ."

But Strickland hates that quotation. He says that I have worn it threadbare.

One other curious thing happened which frightened me as much as anything in all the night's work. When Fleete was dressed he came into the dining-room and sniffed. He had a quaint trick of moving his nose when he sniffed. "Horrid doggy smell, here," said he. "You should really keep those terriers of yours in better order. Try sulphur, Strick."

But Strickland did not answer. He caught hold of the back of a chair, and, without warning, went into an amazing fit of hysterics. It is terrible to see a strong man overtaken with hysteria. Then

it struck me that we had fought for Fleete's soul with the Silver Man in that room, and had disgraced ourselves as Englishmen forever, and I laughed and gasped and gurgled just as shamefully as Strickland, while Fleete thought that we had both gone mad. We never told him what we had done.

Some years later, when Strickland had married and was a church-going member of society for his wife's sake, we reviewed the incident dispassionately, and Strickland suggested that I should put it before the public.

I cannot myself see that this step is likely to clear up the mystery; because, in the first place, no one will believe a rather unpleasant story, and, in the second, it is well known to every right-minded man that the gods of the heathen are stone and brass, and any attempt to deal with them otherwise is justly condemned.

A MATTER OF FACT

And if ye doubt the tale I tell,
Steer through the South Pacific swell;
Go where the branching coral hives
Unending strife of endless lives,
Where, leagued about the 'wildered boat
The rainbow jellies fill and float;
And, lilting where the laver lingers,
The starfish trips on all her fingers;
Where, 'neath his myriad spines ashock,
The sea-egg ripples down the rock;
An orange wonder dimly guessed,
From darkness where the cuttles rest,
Moored o'er the darker deeps that hide
The blind white Sea-snake and his bride;
Who, drowsing, nose the long-lost ships
Let down through darkness to their lips.

The Palms.

ONCE a priest always a priest; once a Mason always a Mason; but once a journalist always and for ever a journalist.

There were three of us, all newspaper men, the only passengers on a little tramp-steamer that ran where her owners told her to go. She had once

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been in the Bilbao iron ore business; had been lent to the Spanish Government for service at Manilla; and was ending her days in the Cape Town coolie-trade, with occasional trips to Madagascar and even as far as England. We found her going to Southampton in ballast, and shipped in her because the fares were nominal. There was Keller, of an American paper, on his way back to the States from palace executions in Madagascar; there was a burly half Dutchman, called Zuyland, who owned and edited a paper up country near Johannesberg; and there was myself, who had solemnly put away all journalism, vowing to forget that I had ever known the difference between an imprint and a stereo advertisement.

Three minutes after Keller spoke to me, as the *Rathmines* cleared Cape Town, I had forgotten the aloofness I desired to feign, and was in heated discussion on the immorality of expanding telegrams beyond a certain fixed point. Then Zuyland came out of his state-room, and we were all at home instantly, because we were men of the same profession, needing no introduction. We annexed the boat formally, broke open the passengers' bath-room door — on the Manilla lines the dons do not wash — cleaned out the orange-peel and cigar-ends at the bottom of the bath, hired a lascar to shave us throughout the voyage, and then asked one another's names.

Three ordinary men would have quarrelled through sheer boredom before they reached Southampton. We, by virtue of our craft, were anything but ordinary men. A large percentage of the tales of the world, the thirty-nine that cannot be told to ladies and the one that can, are common property coming of a common stock. We told them all, as a matter of form, with all their local and specific variants, which are surprising. Then came, in the intervals of steady card-play, more personal histories of adventure and things seen and reported; panics among white folk, when the blind terror ran from man to man on the Brooklyn Bridge, and the people crushed each other to death, they knew not why; fires, and faces that opened and shut their mouths horribly at red-hot window-frames; wrecks in frost and snow, reported from the sleet-sheathed rescue tug at the risk of frost-bite; long rides after diamond thieves; skirmishes on the veldt and in municipal committees with the Boers; glimpses of lazy, tangled Cape politics and the mule-rule in the Transvaal; card-tales, horse-tales, woman-tales by the score and the half hundred; till the first mate, who had seen more than us all put together, but lacked words to clothe his tales with, sat open-mouthed far into the dawn.

When the tales were done we picked up cards till a curious hand or a chance remark made one

or other of us say, "That reminds me of a man who — or a business which —" and the anecdotes would continue while the *Rathmines* kicked her way northward through the warm water.

In the morning of one specially warm night we three were sitting immediately in front of the wheel-house where an old Swedish boatswain whom we called "Frithiof the Dane" was at the wheel pretending that he could not hear our stories. Once or twice Frithiof spun the spokes curiously, and Keller lifted his head from a long chair to ask, "What is it? Can't you get any pull on her?" "There is a feel in the water," said Frithiof, "that I cannot understand. I think that we run down-hills or somethings. She steers bad this morning."

Nobody seems to know the laws that govern the pulse of the big waters. Sometimes even a landsman can tell that the solid ocean is a-tilt, and that the ship is working herself up a long unseen slope; and sometimes the captain says, when neither full steam nor fair wind justifies the length of a day's run, that the ship is sagging downhill; but how these ups and downs come about has not yet been settled authoritatively.

"No, it is a following sea," said Frithiof; "and with a following sea you shall not get good steer-age-way."

The sea was as smooth as a duck-pond, except for a regular oily swell. As I looked over the

side to see where it might be following us from, the sun rose in a perfectly clear sky and struck the water with its light so sharply that it seemed as though the sea should clang like a burnished gong. The wake of the screw and the little white streak cut by the log-line hanging over the stern were the only marks on the water as far as eye could reach.

Keller rolled out of his chair and went aft to get a pine-apple from the ripening stock that were hung inside the after awning.

"Frithiof, the log-line has got tired of swimming. It's coming home," he drawled.

"What?" said Frithiof, his voice jumping several octaves.

"Coming home," Keller repeated, leaning over the stern. I ran to his side and saw the log-line, which till then had been drawn tense over the stern railing, slacken, loop, and come up off the port quarter. Frithiof called up the speaking-tube to the bridge, and the bridge answered, "Yes, nine knots." Then Frithiof spoke again, and the answer was, "What do you want of the skipper?" and Frithiof bellowed, "Call him up."

By this time Zuyland, Keller, and myself had caught something of Frithiof's excitement, for any emotion on shipboard is most contagious. The captain ran out of his cabin, spoke to Frithiof, looked at the log-line, jumped on the bridge, and

in a minute we felt the steamer swing round as Frithiof turned her.

"Going back to Cape Town?" said Keller.

Frithiof did not answer, but tore away at the wheel. Then he beckoned us three to help, and we held the wheel down till the *Rathmines* answered it, and we found ourselves looking into the white of our own wake, with the still oily sea tearing past our bows, though we were not going more than half steam ahead.

The captain stretched out his arm from the bridge and shouted. A minute later I would have given a great deal to have shouted too, for one-half of the sea seemed to shoulder itself above the other half, and came on in the shape of a hill. There was neither crest, comb, nor curl-over to it; nothing but black water with little waves chasing each other about the flanks. I saw it stream past and on a level with the *Rathmines'* bow-plates before the steamer made up her mind to rise, and I argued that this would be the last of all earthly voyages for me. Then we rose for ever and ever and ever, till I heard Keller saying in my ear, "The bowels of the deep, good Lord!" and the *Rathmines* stood poised, her screw racing and drumming on the slope of a hollow that stretched downwards for a good half-mile.

We went down that hollow, nose under for the most part, and the air smelt wet and muddy, like

that of an emptied aquarium. There was a second hill to climb; I saw that much: but the water came aboard and carried me aft till it jammed me against the smoking-room door, and before I could catch breath or clear my eyes again we were rolling to and fro in torn water, with the scuppers pouring like eaves in a thunderstorm.

"There were three waves," said Keller; "and the stoke-hold's flooded."

The firemen were on deck waiting, apparently, to be drowned. The engineer came and dragged them below, and the crew, gasping, began to work the clumsy Board of Trade pump. That showed nothing serious, and when I understood that the *Rathmines* was really on the water, and not beneath it, I asked what had happened.

"The captain says it was a blow-up under the sea — a volcano," said Keller.

"It hasn't warmed anything," I said. I was feeling bitterly cold, and cold was almost unknown in those waters. I went below to change my clothes, and when I came up everything was wiped out by clinging white fog.

"Are there going to be any more surprises?" said Keller to the captain.

"I don't know. Be thankful you're alive, gentlemen. That's a tidal wave thrown up by a volcano. Probably the bottom of the sea has been lifted a few feet somewhere or other. I can't quite

understand this cold spell. Our sea-thermometer says the surface water is 44°, and it should be 68°, at least."

"It's abominable," says Keller, shivering. "But hadn't you better attend to the fog-horn? It seems to me that I heard something."

"Heard! Good heavens!" said the captain from the bridge, "I should think you did." He pulled the string of our fog-horn, which was a weak one. It sputtered and choked, because the stoke-hold was full of water and the fires were half-drowned, and at last gave out a moan. It was answered from the fog by one of the most appalling steam-sirens I have ever heard. Keller turned as white as I did, for the fog, the cold fog, was upon us, and any man may be forgiven for fearing the death he cannot see.

"Give her steam there!" said the captain to the engine-room. "Steam for the whistle, if we have to go dead slow."

We bellowed again, and the damp dripped off the awnings to the deck as we listened for the reply. It seemed to be astern this time, but much nearer than before.

"The *Pembroke Castle*, by gum!" said Keller, and then, viciously, "Well, thank God, we shall sink her too."

"It's a side-wheel steamer," I whispered. "Can't you hear the paddles?"

This time we whistled and roared till the steam gave out, and the answer nearly deafened us. There was a sound of frantic threshing in the water, apparently about fifty yards away, and something shot past in the whiteness that looked as though it were gray and red.

"The *Pembroke Castle* bottom up," said Keller, who, being a journalist, always sought for explanations. "That's the colours of a Castle liner. We're in for a big thing."

"The sea is bewitched," said Frithiof from the wheel-house. "There are two steamers."

Another siren sounded on our bow, and the little steamer rolled in the wash of something that had passed unseen.

"We're evidently in the middle of a fleet," said Keller quietly. "If one doesn't run us down, the other will. Phew! What in creation is that?"

I sniffed, for there was a poisonous rank smell in the cold air — a smell that I had smelt before.

"If I was on land I should say that it was an alligator. It smells like musk," I answered.

"Not ten thousand alligators could make that smell," said Zuyland; "I have smelt them."

"Bewitched! Bewitched!" said Frithiof. "The sea she is turned upside down, and we are walking along the bottom."

Again the *Rathmines* rolled in the wash of some unseen ship, and a silver-gray wave broke over the

bow, leaving on the deck a sheet of sediment — the gray broth that has its place in the fathomless deeps of the sea. A sprinkling of the wave fell on my face, and it was so cold that it stung as boiling water stings. The dead and most untouched deep water of the sea had been heaved to the top by the submarine volcano — the chill, still water that kills all life and smells of desolation and emptiness. We did not need either the blinding fog or that indescribable smell of musk to make us unhappy — we were shivering with cold and wretchedness where we stood.

"The hot air on the cold water makes this fog," said the captain. "It ought to clear in a little time."

"Whistle, oh! whistle, and let's get out of it," said Keller.

The captain whistled again, and far and far astern the invisible twin steam-sirens answered us. Their blasting shriek grew louder, till at last it seemed to tear out of the fog just above our quarter, and I cowered while the *Rathmines* plunged bows under on a double swell that crossed.

"No more," said Frithiof; "it is not good any more. Let us get away, in the name of God."

"Now if a torpedo-boat with a *City of Paris* siren went mad and broke her moorings and hired a friend to help her, it's just conceivable that we

might be carried as we are now. Otherwise this thing is ——"

The last words died on Keller's lips, his eyes began to start from his head, and his jaw fell. Some six or seven feet above the port bulwarks, framed in fog, and as utterly unsupported as the full moon, hung a Face. It was not human, and it certainly was not animal, for it did not belong to this earth as known to man. The mouth was open, revealing a ridiculously tiny tongue — as absurd as the tongue of an elephant; there were tense wrinkles of white skin at the angles of the drawn lips; white feelers like those of a barbel sprang from the lower jaw, and there was no sign of teeth within the mouth. But the horror of the face lay in the eyes, for those were sightless — white, in sockets as white as scraped bone, and blind. Yet for all this the face, wrinkled as the mask of a lion is drawn in Assyrian sculpture, was alive with rage and terror. One long white feeler touched our bulwarks. Then the face disappeared with the swiftness of a blind worm popping into its burrow, and the next thing that I remember is my own voice in my own ears, saying gravely to the mainmast, "But the air-bladder ought to have been forced out of its mouth, you know."

Keller came up to me, ashy white. He put his hand into his pocket, took a cigar, bit it, dropped it, thrust his shaking thumb into his

mouth and mumbled, "The giant gooseberry and the raining frogs! Gimme a light — gimme a light! I say, gimme a light." A little bead of blood dropped from his thumbnail.

I respected the motive, though the manifestation was absurd. "Stop, you'll bite your thumb off," I said, and Keller laughed brokenly as he picked up his cigar. Only Zuyland, leaning over the port bulwarks, seemed self-possessed. He declared later that he was very sick.

"We've seen it," he said, turning round. "That is it."

"What?" said Keller, chewing the unlighted cigar.

As he spoke the fog was blown into shreds, and we saw the sea, gray with mud, rolling on every side of us and empty of all life. Then in one spot it bubbled and became like the pot of ointment that the Bible speaks of. From that wide-ringed trouble a Thing came up — a gray and red Thing with a neck — a Thing that bellowed and writhed in pain. Frithiof drew in his breath and held it till the red letters of the ship's name, woven across his jersey, straggled and opened out as though they had been type badly set. Then he said with a little cluck in his throat, "Ah, me! It is blind. *Hur illa!* That thing is blind," and a murmur of pity went through us all, for we could see that the thing on the water was

blind and in pain. Something had gashed and cut the great sides cruelly, and the blood was spurting out. The gray ooze of the undermost sea lay in the monstrous wrinkles of the back and poured away in sluices. The blind white head flung back and battered the wounds, and the body in its torment rose clear of the red and gray waves till we saw a pair of quivering shoulders streaked with weed and rough with shells, but as white in the clear spaces as the hairless, nameless, blind, toothless head. Afterwards came a dot on the horizon and the sound of a shrill scream, and it was as though a shuttle shot all across the sea in one breath, and a second head and neck tore through the levels, driving a whispering wall of water to right and left. The two Things met — the one untouched and the other in its death throe — male and female, we said, the female coming to the male. She circled round him bellowing, and laid her neck across the curve of his great turtle-back, and he disappeared under water for an instant, but flung up again, grunting in agony while the blood ran. Once the entire head and neck shot clear of the water and stiffened, and I heard Keller saying, as though he was watching a street accident, "Give him air. For God's sake give him air!" Then the death struggle began, with crampings and twistings and jerkings of the white bulk to and fro, till our little steamer rolled

again, and each gray wave coated her plates with the gray slime. The sun was clear, there was no wind, and we watched, the whole crew, stokers and all, in wonder and pity, but chiefly pity. The Thing was so helpless, and, save for his mate, so alone. No human eye should have beheld him; it was monstrous and indecent to exhibit him there in trade waters between atlas degrees of latitude. He had been spewed up, mangled and dying, from his rest on the sea-floor, where he might have lived till the Judgment Day, and we saw the tides of his life go from him as an angry tide goes out across rocks in the teeth of a landward gale. The mate lay rocking on the water a little distance off, bellowing continually, and the smell of musk came down upon the ship, making us cough.

At last the battle for life ended in a batter of coloured seas. We saw the writhing neck fall like a flail, the carcase turn sideways, showing the glint of a white belly and the inset of a gigantic hind-leg or flapper. Then all sank, and sea boiled over it, while the mate swam round and round, darting her blind head in every direction. Though we might have feared that she would attack the steamer, no power on earth could have drawn any one of us from our places that hour. We watched, holding our breaths. The mate paused in her search—we could hear the wash beating along her

sides; reared her neck as high as she could reach, blind and lonely in all that loneliness of the sea, and sent one desperate bellow booming across the swells, as an oyster-shell skips across a pond. Then she made off to the westward, the sun shining on the white head and the wake behind it, till nothing was left to see but a little pin-point of silver on the horizon. We stood on our course again, and the *Rathmines*, coated with the sea-sediment from bow to stern, looked like a ship made gray with terror.

. . . . . .

"We must pool our notes," was the first coherent remark from Keller. "We're three trained journalists—we hold absolutely the biggest scoop on record. Start fair."

I objected to this. Nothing is gained by collaboration in journalism when all deal with the same facts, so we went to work each according to his own lights. Keller triple-headed his account, talked about our "gallant captain," and wound up with an allusion to American enterprise in that it was a citizen of Dayton, Ohio, that had seen the sea-serpent. This sort of thing would have discredited the Creation, much more a mere sea tale, but as a specimen of the picture-writing of a half-civilised people it was very interesting. Zuyland took a heavy column and a half, giving approximate lengths and breadths and the whole list of

the crew, whom he had sworn on oath to testify to his facts. There was nothing fantastic or flamboyant in Zuyland. I wrote three-quarters of a leaded bourgeois column, roughly speaking, and refrained from putting any journalese into it for reasons that had begun to appear to me.

Keller was insolent with joy. He was going to cable from Southampton to the New York "World," mail his account to America on the same day, paralyse London with his three columns of loosely knitted headlines, and generally efface the earth. "You'll see how I work a big scoop when I get it," he said.

"Is this your first visit to England?" I asked.

"Yes," said he. "You don't seem to appreciate the beauty of our scoop. It's pyramidal — the death of the sea-serpent! Good heavens alive, man, it's the biggest thing ever vouchsafed to a paper!"

"Curious to think that it will never appear in any paper, isn't it?" I said.

Zuyland was near me, and he nodded quickly.

"What do you mean?" said Keller. "If you're enough of a Britisher to throw this thing away, I sha'n't. I thought you were a newspaper man."

"I am. That's why I know. Don't be an ass, Keller. Remember, I'm seven hundred years your senior, and what your grandchildren may learn five hundred years hence, I learned from my grand-

fathers about five hundred years ago. You won't do it, because you can't."

This conversation was held in open sea, where everything seems possible, some hundred miles from Southampton. We passed the Needles Light at dawn, and the lifting day showed the stucco villas on the green and the awful orderliness of England—line upon line, wall upon wall, solid stone dock and monolithic pier. We waited an hour in the Customs shed, and there was ample time for the effect to soak in.

"Now, Keller, you face the music. The *Havel* goes out to-day. Mail by her, and I'll take you to the telegraph office," I said.

I heard Keller gasp as the influence of the land closed about him, cowing him as they say Newmarket Heath cows a young horse unused to open country.

"I want to retouch my stuff. Suppose we wait till we get to London?" he said.

Zuyland, by the way, had torn up his account and thrown it overboard that morning early. His reasons were my reasons.

In the train Keller began to revise his copy, and every time that he looked at the trim little fields, the red villas, and the embankments of the line, the blue pencil plunged remorselessly through the slips. He appeared to have dredged the dictionary for adjectives. I could think of none that

he had not used. Yet he was a perfectly sound poker player and never showed more cards than were sufficient to take the pool.

"Aren't you going to leave him a single bellow?" I asked sympathetically. "Remember, everything goes in the States, from a trouser-button to a double eagle."

"That's just the curse of it," said Keller below his breath. "We've played 'em for suckers so often that when it comes to the golden truth — I'd like to try this on a London paper. You have first call there, though."

"Not in the least. I'm not touching the thing in the papers. I shall be happy to leave 'em all to you; but surely you'll cable it home?"

"No. Not if I can make the scoop here and see the Britishers sit up."

"You won't do it with three column of slushy headline, believe me. They don't sit up as quickly as some people."

"I'm beginning to think that too. Does *nothing* make any difference in this country?" he said, looking out of the window. "How old is that farm-house."

"New. It can't be more than two hundred years at the most."

"Um. Fields, too?"

"That hedge there must have been clipped for about eighty years."

"Labour cheap — eh?"

"Pretty much. Well, I suppose you'd like to try the 'Times,' wouldn't you?"

"No," said Keller, looking at Winchester Cathedral. "Might as well try to electrify a hay-rick. And to think that the 'World' would take three columns and ask for more — with illustrations too! It's sickening."

"But the 'Times' might," I began.

Keller flung his paper across the carriage, and it opened in its austere majesty of solid type — opened with the crackle of an encyclopædia.

"Might! You *might* work your way through the bow-plates of a cruiser. Look at that first page!"

"It strikes you that way, does it?" I said. "Then I'd recommend you to try a light and frivolous journal."

"With a thing like this of mine — of ours? It's sacred history!"

I showed him a paper which I conceived would be after his own heart, in that it was modelled on American lines.

"That's homey," he said, "but it's not the real thing. Now, I should like one of these fat old 'Times'' columns. Probably there'd be a bishop in the office, though."

When we reached London, Keller disappeared in the direction of the Strand. What his experi-

ences may have been I cannot tell, but it seems that he invaded the office of an evening paper at 11.45 a. m. (I told him English editors were most idle at that hour), and mentioned my name as that of a witness to the truth of his story.

"I was nearly fired out," he said furiously at lunch. "As soon as I mentioned you, the old man said that I was to tell you that they didn't want any more of your practical jokes, and that you knew the hours to call if you had anything to sell, and that they'd see you condemned before they helped to puff one of your infernal yarns in advance. Say, what record do you hold for truth in this city, anyway?"

"A beauty. You ran up against it, that's all. Why don't you leave the English papers alone and cable to New York? Everything goes over there."

"Can't you see that's just why?" he repeated.

"I saw it a long time ago. You don't intend to cable, then?"

"Yes, I do," he answered, in the over-emphatic voice of one who does not know his own mind.

That afternoon I walked him abroad and about, over the streets that run between the pavements like channels of grooved and tongued lava, over the bridges that are made of enduring stone, through subways floored and sided with yard-thick concrete, between houses that are never re-

built, and by river steps hewn to the eye from the living rock. A black fog chased us into Westminster Abbey, and, standing there in the darkness, I could hear the wings of the dead centuries circling round the head of Litchfield A. Keller, journalist, of Dayton, Ohio, U. S. A., whose mission it was to make the Britishers sit up.

He stumbled gasping into the thick gloom, and the roar of the traffic came to his bewildered ears.

"Let's go to the telegraph office and cable," I said. "Can't you hear the New York 'World' crying for news of the great sea-serpent, blind, white, and smelling of musk, stricken to death by a submarine volcano, assisted by his loving wife to die in mid-ocean, as visualised by an independent American citizen, a breezy, newsy, brainy newspaper man of Dayton, Ohio? 'Rah for the Buckeye State. Step lively! Both gates! Szz! Boom — ah!" Keller was a Princeton man, and he seemed to need encouragement.

"You've got me on your own ground," said he, tugging at his overcoat pocket. He pulled out his copy, with the cable forms — for he had written out his telegram — and put them all into my hand, groaning, "I pass. If I hadn't come to your cursed country — if I'd sent it off at Southampton — if I ever get you west of the Alleghanies, if ——"

"Never mind, Keller. It isn't your fault. It's

the fault of your country. If you had been seven hundred years older you'd have done what I'm going to do."

"What are you going to do?"

"Tell it as a lie."

"Fiction?" This with the full-blooded disgust of a journalist for the illegitimate branch of the profession.

"You can call it that if you like. I shall call it a lie."

And a lie it has become, for Truth is a naked lady, and if by accident she is drawn up from the bottom of the sea, it behoves a gentleman either to give her a print petticoat or to turn his face to the wall and vow that he did not see.

THE STRANGE RIDE OF MORROWBIE JUKES

Alive or dead — there is no other way.—*Native Proverb.*

THERE is no invention about this tale. Jukes by accident stumbled upon a village that is well known to exist, though he is the only Englishman who has been there. A somewhat similar institution used to flourish on the outskirts of Calcutta, and there is a story that if you go into the heart of Bikanir, which is in the heart of the Great Indian Desert, you shall come across not a village but a town where the Dead who did not die but may not live have established their headquarters. And, since it is perfectly true that in the same Desert is a wonderful city where all the rich money-lenders retreat after they have made their fortunes (fortunes so vast that the owners cannot trust even the strong hand of the Government to protect them, but take refuge in the waterless sands), and drive sumptuous C-spring barouches, and buy beautiful girls and decorate their palaces with gold and ivory and Minton tiles and mother-o'-pearl, I do not see why Jukes's tale should not be true. He is a Civil

Engineer, with a head for plans and distances and things of that kind, and he certainly would not take the trouble to invent imaginary traps. He could earn more by doing his legitimate work. He never varies the tale in the telling, and grows very hot and indignant when he thinks of the disrespectful treatment he received. He wrote this quite straightforwardly at first, but he has touched it up in places and introduced Moral Reflections: thus: —

In the beginning it all arose from a slight attack of fever. My work necessitated my being in camp for some months between Pakpattan and Mubarakpur — a desolate sandy stretch of country, as every one who has had the misfortune to go there may know. My coolies were neither more nor less exasperating than other gangs, and my work demanded sufficient attention to keep me from moping, had I been inclined to so unmanly a weakness.

On the 23rd December, 1884, I felt a little feverish. There was a full moon at the time, and, in consequence, every dog near my tent was baying it. The brutes assembled in twos and threes and drove me frantic. A few days previously I had shot one loud-mouthed singer and suspended his carcass *in terrorem* about fifty yards from my tent-door, but his friends fell upon, fought for, and ultimately devoured the body: and, as it seemed

to me, sang their hymns of thanksgiving afterwards with renewed energy.

The light-headedness which accompanies fever acts differently on different men. My irritation gave way, after a short time, to a fixed determination to slaughter one huge black-and-white beast who had been foremost in song and first in flight throughout the evening. Thanks to a shaking hand and a giddy head, I had already missed him twice with both barrels of my shot-gun, when it struck me that my best plan would be to ride him down in the open and finish him off with a hog-spear. This, of course, was merely the semi-delirious notion of a fever-patient; but I remember that it struck me at the time as being eminently practical and feasible.

I therefore ordered my groom to saddle Pornic and bring him round quietly to the rear of my tent. When the pony was ready, I stood at his head prepared to mount and dash out as soon as the dog should again lift up his voice. Pornic, by the way, had not been out of his pickets for a couple of days; the night air was crisp and chilly; and I was armed with a specially long and sharp pair of persuaders with which I had been rousing a sluggish cob that afternoon. You will easily believe, then, that when he was let go he went quickly. In one moment, for the brute bolted as straight as a die, the tent was left far behind, and

we were flying over the smooth sandy soil at racing speed. In another we had passed the wretched dog, and I had almost forgotten why it was that I had taken horse and hog-spear.

The delirium of fever and the excitement of rapid motion through the air must have taken away the remnant of my senses. I have a faint recollection of standing upright in my stirrups, and of brandishing my hog-spear at the great white Moon that looked down so calmly on my mad gallop; and of shouting challenges to the camel-thorn bushes as they whizzed past. Once or twice, I believe, I swayed forward on Pornic's neck, and literally hung on by my spurs—as the marks next morning showed.

The wretched beast went forward like a thing possessed, over what seemed to be a limitless expanse of moonlit sand. Next, I remember, the ground rose suddenly in front of us, and as we topped the ascent I saw the waters of the Sutlej shining like a silver bar below. Then Pornic blundered heavily on his nose, and we rolled together down some unseen slope.

I must have lost consciousness, for when I recovered I was lying on my stomach in a heap of soft white sand, and the dawn was beginning to break dimly over the edge of the slope down which I had fallen. As the light grew stronger I saw I was at the bottom of a horseshoe-shaped

crater of sand, opening on one side directly on to the shoals of the Sutlej. My fever had altogether left me, and, with the exception of a slight dizziness in the head, I felt no bad effects from the fall over night.

Pornic, who was standing a few yards away, was naturally a good deal exhausted, but had not hurt himself in the least. His saddle, a favourite polo one, was much knocked about, and had been twisted under his belly. It took me some time to put him to rights, and in the meantime I had ample opportunities of observing the spot into which I had so foolishly dropped.

At the risk of being considered tedious, I must describe it at length, inasmuch as an accurate mental picture of its peculiarities will be of material assistance in enabling the reader to understand what follows.

Imagine then, as I have said before, a horse-shoe-shaped crater of sand with steeply-graded sand walls about thirty-five feet high. (The slope, I fancy, must have been about 65°.) This crater enclosed a level piece of ground about fifty yards long by thirty at its broadest part, with a rude well in the centre. Round the bottom of the crater, about three feet from the level of the ground proper, ran a series of eighty-three semicircular, ovoid, square, and multilateral holes, all about three feet at the mouth. Each hole on inspection

showed that it was carefully shored internally with drift-wood and bamboos, and over the mouth a wooden drip-board projected, like the peak of a jockey's cap, for two feet. No sign of life was visible in these tunnels, but a most sickening stench pervaded the entire amphitheatre — a stench fouler than any which my wanderings in Indian villages have introduced me to.

Having remounted Pornic, who was as anxious as I to get back to camp, I rode round the base of the horseshoe to find some place whence an exit would be practicable. The inhabitants, whoever they might be, had not thought fit to put in an appearance, so I was left to my own devices. My first attempt to "rush" Pornic up the steep sand-banks showed me that I had fallen into a trap exactly on the same model as that which the ant-lion sets for its prey. At each step the shifting sand poured down from above in tons, and rattled on the drip-boards of the holes like small shot. A couple of ineffectual charges sent us both rolling down to the bottom, half choked with the torrents of sand; and I was constrained to turn my attention to the river-bank.

Here everything seemed easy enough. The sand-hills ran down to the river edge, it is true, but there were plenty of shoals and shallows across which I could gallop Pornic, and find my way back to *terra firma* by turning sharply to the right

or the left. As I led Pornic over the sands I was startled by the faint pop of a rifle across the river; and at the same moment a bullet dropped with a sharp "*whit*" close to Pornic's head.

There was no mistaking the nature of the missile—a regulation Martini-Henry "picket." About five hundred yards away a country-boat was anchored in midstream; and a jet of smoke drifting away from its bows in the still morning air showed me whence the delicate attention had come. Was ever a respectable gentleman in such an *impasse?* The treacherous sand slope allowed no escape from a spot which I had visited most involuntarily, and a promenade on the river frontage was the signal for a bombardment from some insane native in a boat. I'm afraid that I lost my temper very much indeed.

Another bullet reminded me that I had better save my breath to cool my porridge; and I retreated hastily up the sands and back to the horseshoe, where I saw that the noise of the rifle had drawn sixty-five human beings from the badger-holes which I had up till that point supposed to be untenanted. I found myself in the midst of a crowd of spectators—about forty men, twenty women, and one child who could not have been more than five years old. They were all scantily clothed in that salmon-coloured cloth which one associates with Hindu mendicants, and, at first

sight, gave me the impression of a band of loathsome *fakirs*. The filth and repulsiveness of the assembly were beyond all description, and I shuddered to think what their life in the badger-holes must be.

Even in these days, when local self-government has destroyed the greater part of a native's respect for a Sahib, I have been accustomed to a certain amount of civility from my inferiors, and on approaching the crowd naturally expected that there would be some recognition of my presence. As a matter of fact, there was; but it was by no means what I had looked for.

The ragged crew actually laughed at me — such laughter I hope I may never hear again. They cackled, yelled, whistled, and howled as I walked into their midst; some of them literally throwing themselves down on the ground in convulsions of unholy mirth. In a moment I had let go Pornic's head, and, irritated beyond expression at the morning's adventure, commenced cuffing those nearest to me with all the force I could. The wretches dropped under my blows like nine-pins, and the laughter gave place to wails for mercy; while those yet untouched clasped me round the knees, imploring me in all sorts of uncouth tongues to spare them.

In the tumult, and just when I was feeling very much ashamed of myself for having thus easily

given way to my temper, a thin, high voice murmured in English from behind my shoulder: "Sahib! Sahib! Do you not know me? Sahib, it is Gunga Dass, the telegraph-master."

I spun round quickly and faced the speaker.

Gunga Dass (I have, of course, no hesitation in mentioning the man's real name) I had known four years before as a Deccanee Brahmin lent by the Punjab Government to one of the Khalsia States. He was in charge of a branch telegraph-office there, and when I had last met him was a jovial, full-stomached portly Government servant with a marvellous capacity for making bad puns in English — a peculiarity which made me remember him long after I had forgotten his services to me in his official capacity. It is seldom that a Hindu makes English puns.

Now, however, the man was changed beyond all recognition. Caste-mark, stomach, slate-coloured continuations, and unctuous speech were all gone. I looked at a withered skeleton, turbanless and almost naked, with long matted hair and deep-set codfish-eyes. But for a crescent-shaped scar on the left cheek — the result of an accident for which I was responsible — I should never have known him. But it was indubitably Gunga Dass, and — for this I was thankful — an English-speaking native who might at least tell me the meaning of all that I had gone through that day.

The crowd retreated to some distance as I turned towards the miserable figure and ordered him to show me some method of escaping from the crater. He held a freshly-plucked crow in his hand, and in reply to my question climbed slowly on a platform of sand which ran in front of the holes, and commenced lighting a fire there in silence. Dried bents, sand-poppies, and driftwood burn quickly; and I derived much consolation from the fact that he lit them with an ordinary sulphur match. When they were in a bright glow, and the crow was neatly spitted in front thereof, Gunga Dass began without a word of preamble: —

"There are only two kinds of men, Sar. The alive and the dead. When you are dead you are dead, but when you are alive you live." (Here the crow demanded his attention for an instant as it twirled before the fire in danger of being burnt to a cinder.) "If you die at home and do not die when you come to the ghât to be burnt, you come here."

The nature of the reeking village was made plain now, and all that I had known or read of the grotesque and the horrible paled before the fact just communicated by the ex-Brahmin. Sixteen years ago, when I first landed in Bombay, I had been told by a wandering Armenian of the existence, somewhere in India, of a place to which such Hindus as had the misfortune to recover from

trance or catalepsy were conveyed and kept, and I recollect laughing heartily at what I was then pleased to consider a traveller's tale. Sitting at the bottom of the sand-trap, the memory of Watson's Hotel, with its swinging punkahs, white-robed servants, and the sallow-faced Armenian, rose up in my mind as vividly as a photograph, and I burst into a loud fit of laughter. The contrast was too absurd!

Gunga Dass, as he bent over the unclean bird, watched me curiously. Hindus seldom laugh, and his surroundings were not such as to move him that way. He removed the crow solemnly from the wooden spit and as solemnly devoured it. Then he continued his story, which I give in his own words: —

"In epidemics of the cholera you are carried to be burnt almost before you are dead. When you come to the riverside the cold air, perhaps, makes you alive, and then, if you are only little alive, mud is put on your nose and mouth and you die conclusively. If you are rather more alive, more mud is put; but if you are too lively they let you go and take you away. I was too lively, and made protestation with anger against the indignities that they endeavoured to press upon me. In those days I was Brahmin and proud man. Now I am dead man and eat" — here he eyed the well-gnawed breast-bone with the first sign

of emotion that I had seen in him since we met — "crows, and — other things. They took me from my sheets when they saw that I was too lively and gave me medicines for one week, and I survived successfully. Then they sent me by rail from my place to Okara Station, with a man to take care of me; and at Okara Station we met two other men, and they conducted we three on camels, in the night, from Okara Station to this place, and they propelled me from the top to the bottom, and the other two succeeded, and I have been here ever since two and a half years. Once I was Brahmin and proud man, and now I eat crows."

"There is no way of getting out?"

"None of what kind at all. When I first came I made experiments frequently, and all the others also, but we have always succumbed to the sand which is precipitated upon our heads."

"But surely," I broke in at this point, "the river-front is open, and it is worth while dodging the bullets; while at night ——"

I had already matured a rough plan of escape which a natural instinct of selfishness forbade me sharing with Gunga Dass. He, however, divined my unspoken thought almost as soon as it was formed; and, to my intense astonishment, gave vent to a long, low chuckle of derision — the laughter, be it understood, of a superior or at least of an equal.

"You will not"—he had dropped the Sir after his first sentence—"make any escape that way. But you can try. I have tried. Once only."

The sensation of nameless terror which I had in vain attempted to strive against overmastered me completely. My long fast—it was now close upon ten o'clock, and I had eaten nothing since tiffin on the previous day—combined with the violent agitation of the ride had exhausted me, and I verily believe that, for a few minutes, I acted as one mad. I hurled myself against the sand-slope. I ran round the base of the crater, blaspheming and praying by turns. I crawled out among the sedges of the river-front, only to be driven back each time in an agony of nervous dread by the rifle-bullets which cut up the sand round me—for I dared not face the death of a mad dog among that hideous crowd—and so fell, spent and raving, at the curb of the well. No one had taken the slightest notice of an exhibition which makes me blush hotly even when I think of it now.

Two or three men trod on my panting body as they drew water, but they were evidently used to this sort of thing, and had no time to waste upon me. Gunga Dass, indeed, when he had banked the embers of his fire with sand, was at some pains to throw half a cupful of fetid water over my head, an attention for which I could have fallen

on my knees and thanked him, but he was laughing all the while in the same mirthless, wheezy key that greeted me on my first attempt to force the shoals. And so, in a half-fainting state, I lay till noon. Then, being only a man after all, I felt hungry, and said as much to Gunga Dass, whom I had begun to regard as my natural protector. Following the impulse of the outer world when dealing with natives, I put my hand into my pocket and drew out four annas. The absurdity of the gift struck me at once, and I was about to replace the money.

Gunga Dass, however, cried: "Give me the money, all you have, or I will get help, and we will kill you!"

A Briton's first impulse, I believe, is to guard the contents of his pockets; but a moment's thought showed me the folly of differing with the one man who had it in his power to make me comfortable, and with whose help it was possible that I might eventually escape from the crater. I gave him all the money in my possession, Rs. 9-8-5—nine rupees, eight annas, and five pie — for I always keep small change as *bakshish* when I am in camp. Gunga Dass clutched the coins, and hid them at once in his ragged loin-cloth, looking round to assure himself that no one had observed us.

"*Now* I will give you something to eat," said he.

What pleasure my money could have given him I am unable to say; but inasmuch as it did please him, I was not sorry that I had parted with it so readily, for I had no doubt that he would have had me killed if I had refused. One does not protest against the doings of a den of wild beasts; and my companions were lower than any beasts. While I ate what Gunga Dass had provided, a coarse *chapatti* and a cupful of the foul well-water, the people showed not the faintest sign of curiosity —that curiosity which is so rampant, as a rule, in an Indian village.

I could even fancy that they despised me. At all events, they treated me with the most chilling indifference, and Gunga Dass was nearly as bad. I plied him with questions about the terrible village, and received extremely unsatisfactory answers. So far as I could gather, it had been in existence from time immemorial — whence I concluded that it was at least a century old — and during that time no one had ever been known to escape from it. (I had to control myself here with both hands, lest the blind terror should lay hold of me a second time and drive me raving round the crater.) Gunga Dass took a malicious pleasure in emphasising this point and in watching me wince. Nothing that I could do would induce him to tell me who the mysterious "They" were.

"It is so ordered," he would reply, "and I do not yet know any one who has disobeyed the orders."

"Only wait till my servant finds that I am missing," I retorted, "and I promise you that this place shall be cleared off the face of the earth, and I'll give you a lesson in civility, too, my friend."

"Your servants would be torn in pieces before they came near this place; and, besides, you are dead, my dear friend. It is not your fault, of course, but none the less you are dead *and* buried."

At irregular intervals supplies of food, I was told, were dropped down from the land side into the amphitheatre, and the inhabitants fought for them like wild beasts. When a man felt his death coming on he retreated to his lair and died there. The body was sometimes dragged out of the hole and thrown on to the sand, or allowed to rot where it lay.

The phrase "thrown on to the sand" caught my attention, and I asked Gunga Dass whether this sort of thing was not likely to breed a pestilence.

"That," said he, with another of his wheezy chuckles, "you may see for yourself subsequently. You will have much time to make observations."

Whereat, to his great delight, I winced once more and hastily continued the conversation:

"And how do you live here from day to day? What do you do?" The question elicited exactly the same answer as before — coupled with the information that "this place is like your European heaven; there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage."

Gunga Dass had been educated at a Mission School, and, as he himself admitted, had he only changed his religion "like a wise man," might have avoided the living grave which was now his portion. But as long as I was with him I fancy he was happy.

Here was a Sahib, a representative of the dominant race, helpless as a child and completely at the mercy of his native neighbours. In a deliberate, lazy way he set himself to torture me as a schoolboy would devote a rapturous half-hour to watching the agonies of an impaled beetle, or as a ferret in a blind burrow might glue himself comfortably to the neck of a rabbit. The burden of his conversation was that there was no escape "of no kind whatever," and that I should stay here till I died and was "thrown on to the sand." If it were possible to forejudge the conversation of the Damned on the advent of a new soul in their abode, I should say that they would speak as Gunga Dass did to me throughout that long afternoon. I was powerless to protest or answer; all my energies being devoted to a struggle against the in-

explicable terror that threatened to overwhelm me again and again. I can compare the feeling to nothing except the struggles of a man against the overpowering nausea of the Channel passage — only my agony was of the spirit and infinitely more terrible.

As the day wore on, the inhabitants began to appear in full strength to catch the rays of the afternoon sun, which were now sloping in at the mouth of the crater. They assembled by little knots, and talked among themselves without even throwing a glance in my direction. About four o'clock, so far as I could judge, Gunga Dass rose and dived into his lair for a moment, emerging with a live crow in his hands. The wretched bird was in a most draggled and deplorable condition, but seemed to be in no way afraid of its master. Advancing cautiously to the river-front, Gunga Dass stepped from tussock to tussock until he had reached a smooth patch of sand directly in the line of the boat's fire. The occupants of the boat took no notice. Here he stopped, and, with a couple of dexterous turns of the wrist, pegged the bird on its back with outstretched wings. As was only natural, the crow began to shriek at once and beat the air with its claws. In a few seconds the clamour had attracted the attention of a bevy of wild crows on a shoal a few hundred yards away, where they were discussing some-

thing that looked like a corpse. Half a dozen crows flew over at once to see what was going on, and also, as it proved, to attack the pinioned bird. Gunga Dass, who had lain down on a tussock, motioned to me to be quiet, though I fancy this was a needless precaution. In a moment, and before I could see how it happened, a wild crow, who had grappled with the shrieking and helpless bird, was entangled in the latter's claws, swiftly disengaged by Gunga Dass, and pegged down beside its companion in adversity. Curiosity, it seemed, overpowered the rest of the flock, and almost before Gunga Dass and I had time to withdraw to the tussock, two more captives were struggling in the upturned claws of the decoys. So the chase —if I can give it so dignified a name —continued until Gunga Dass had captured seven crows. Five of them he throttled at once, reserving two for further operations another day. I was a good deal impressed by this, to me, novel method of securing food, and complimented Gunga Dass on his skill.

"It is nothing to do," said he. "To-morrow you must do it for me. You are stronger than I am."

This calm assumption of superiority upset me not a little, and I answered peremptorily: "Indeed, you old ruffian? What do you think I have given you money for?"

"Very well," was the unmoved reply. "Perhaps not to-morrow, nor the day after, nor subsequently; but in the end, and for many years, you will catch crows and eat crows, and you will thank your European God that you have crows to catch and eat."

I could have cheerfully strangled him for this; but judged it best under the circumstances to smother my resentment. An hour later I was eating one of the crows; and, as Gunga Dass had said, thanking my God that I had a crow to eat. Never as long as I live shall I forget that evening meal. The whole population were squatting on the hard sand platform opposite their dens, huddled over tiny fires of refuse and dried rushes. Death, having once laid his hand upon these men and forborne to strike, seemed to stand aloof from them now; for most of our company were old men, bent and worn and twisted with years, and women aged to all appearance as the Fates themselves. They sat together in knots and talked — God only knows what they found to discuss — in low equable tones, curiously in contrast to the strident babble with which natives are accustomed to make day hideous. Now and then an access of that sudden fury which had possessed me in the morning would lay hold on a man or woman; and with yells and imprecations the sufferer would attack the steep slope until, baffled and bleeding,

he fell back on the platform incapable of moving a limb. The others would never even raise their eyes when this happened, as men too well aware of the futility of their fellows' attempts and wearied with their useless repetition. I saw four such outbursts in the course of that evening.

Gunga Dass took an eminently business-like view of my situation, and while we were dining — I can afford to laugh at the recollection now, but it was painful enough at the time — propounded the terms on which he would consent to "do" for me. My nine rupees, eight annas, he argued, at the rate of three annas a day, would provide me with food for fifty-one days, or about seven weeks; that is to say, he would be willing to cater for me for that length of time. At the end of it I was to look after myself. For a further consideration — *videlicet* my boots — he would be willing to allow me to occupy the den next to his own, and would supply me with as much dried grass for bedding as he could spare.

"Very well, Gunga Dass," I replied; "to the first terms I cheerfully agree, but, as there is nothing on earth to prevent my killing you as you sit here and taking everything that you have" (I thought of the two invaluable crows at the time), "I flatly refuse to give you my boots and shall take whichever den I please."

The stroke was a bold one, and I was glad when

I saw that it had succeeded. Gunga Dass changed his tone immediately, and disavowed all intention of asking for my boots. At the time it did not strike me as at all strange that I, a Civil Engineer, a man of thirteen years' standing in the Service, and, I trust, an average Englishman, should thus calmly threaten murder and violence against the man who had, for a consideration it is true, taken me under his wing. I had left the world, it seemed, for centuries. I was as certain then, as I am now of my own existence, that in the accursed settlement there was no law save that of the strongest; that the living dead men had thrown behind them every canon of the world which had cast them out; and that I had to depend for my own life on my strength and vigilance alone. The crew of the ill-fated *Mignonette* are the only men who would understand my frame of mind. "At present," I argued to myself, "I am strong and a match for six of these wretches. It is imperatively necessary that I should, for my own sake, keep both health and strength until the hour of my release comes — if it ever does."

Fortified with these resolutions, I ate and drank as much as I could, and made Gunga Dass understand that I intended to be his master, and that the least sign of insubordination on his part would be visited with the only punishment I had it in my power to inflict — sudden and violent death.

Shortly after this I went to bed. That is to say, Gunga Dass gave me a double armful of dried bents which I thrust down the mouth of the lair to the right of his, and followed myself, feet foremost; the hole running about nine feet into the sand with a slight downward inclination, and being neatly shored with timbers. From my den, which faced the river-front, I was able to watch the waters of the Sutlej flowing past under the light of a young moon and compose myself to sleep as best I might.

The horrors of that night I shall never forget. My den was nearly as narrow as a coffin, and the sides had been worn smooth and greasy by the contact of innumerable naked bodies, added to which it smelt abominably. Sleep was altogether out of the question to one in my excited frame of mind. As the night wore on, it seemed that the entire amphitheatre was filled with legions of unclean devils that, trooping up from the shoals below, mocked the unfortunates in their lairs.

Personally I am not of an imaginative temperament — very few Engineers are — but on that occasion I was as completely prostrated with nervous terror as any woman. After half an hour or so, however, I was able once more to calmly review my chances of escape. Any exit by the steep sand walls was, of course, impracticable. I had been thoroughly convinced of this some time be-

fore. It was possible, just possible, that I might, in the uncertain moonlight, safely run the gauntlet of the rifle-shots. The place was so full of terror for me that I was prepared to undergo any risk in leaving it. Imagine my delight, then, when after creeping stealthily to the river-front I found that the infernal boat was not there. My freedom lay before me in the next few steps!

By walking out to the first shallow pool that lay at the foot of the projecting left horn of the horse-shoe, I could wade across, turn the flank of the crater, and make my way inland. Without a moment's hesitation I marched briskly past the tussocks where Gunga Dass had snared the crows, and out in the direction of the smooth white sand beyond. My first step from the tufts of dried grass showed me how utterly futile was any hope of escape; for, as I put my foot down, I felt an indescribable drawing, sucking motion of the sand below. Another moment, and my leg was swallowed up nearly to the knee. In the moonlight the whole surface of the sand seemed to be shaken with devilish delight at my disappointment. I struggled clear, sweating with terror and exertion, back to the tussocks behind me, and fell on my face.

My only means of escape from the semicircle was protected with a quicksand!

How long I lay I have not the faintest idea; but I was roused at the last by the malevolent

chuckle of Gunga Dass at my ear. "I would advise you, Protector of the Poor" (the ruffian was speaking English), "to return to your house. It is unhealthy to lie down here. Moreover, when the boat returns, you will most certainly be rifled at." He stood over me in the dim light of the dawn, chuckling and laughing to himself. Suppressing my first impulse to catch the man by the neck and throw him on to the quicksand, I rose sullenly and followed him to the platform below the burrows.

Suddenly, and futilely as I thought while I spoke, I asked: "Gunga Dass, what is the good of the boat if I can't get out *anyhow?*" I recollect that even in my deepest trouble I had been speculating vaguely on the waste of ammunition in guarding an already well protected foreshore.

Gunga Dass laughed again and made answer: "They have the boat only in daytime. It is for the reason that *there is a way*. I hope we shall have the pleasure of your company for much longer time. It is a pleasant spot when you have been here some years and eaten roast crow long enough."

I staggered, numbed and helpless, towards the fetid burrow allotted to me, and fell asleep. An hour or so later I was awakened by a piercing scream—the shrill, high-pitched scream of a horse in pain. Those who have once heard that will

never forget the sound. I found some little difficulty in scrambling out of the burrow. When I was in the open, I saw Pornic, my poor old Pornic, lying dead on the sandy soil. How they had killed him I cannot guess. Gunga Dass explained that horse was better than crow, and "greatest good of greatest number is political maxim. We are now Republic, Mister Jukes, and you are entitled to a fair share of the beast. If you like, we will pass a vote of thanks. Shall I propose?"

Yes, we were a Republic indeed! A Republic of wild beasts penned at the bottom of a pit, to eat and fight and sleep till we died. I attempted no protest of any kind, but sat down and stared at the hideous sight in front of me. In less time almost than it takes me to write this, Pornic's body was divided, in some unclean way or other; the men and women had dragged the fragments on to the platform and were preparing their morning meal. Gunga Dass cooked mine. The almost irresistible impulse to fly at the sand walls until I was wearied laid hold of me afresh, and I had to struggle against it with all my might. Gunga Dass was offensively jocular till I told him that if he addressed another remark of any kind whatever to me I should strangle him where he sat. This silenced him till silence became insupportable, and I bade him say something.

"You will live here till you die like the other

Feringhi," he said coolly, watching me over the fragment of gristle that he was gnawing.

"What other Sahib, you swine? Speak at once, and don't stop to tell me a lie."

"He is over there," answered Gunga Dass, pointing to a burrow-mouth about four doors to the left of my own. "You can see for yourself. He died in the burrow as you will die, and I will die, and as all these men and women and the one child will also die."

"For pity's sake tell me all you know about him. Who was he? When did he come, and when did he die?"

This appeal was a weak step on my part. Gunga Dass only leered and replied: "I will not — unless you give me something first."

Then I recollected where I was, and struck the man between the eyes, partially stunning him. He stepped down from the platform at once, and, cringing and fawning and weeping and attempting to embrace my feet, led me round to the burrow which he had indicated.

"I know nothing whatever about the gentleman. Your God be my witness that I do not. He was as anxious to escape as you were, and he was shot from the boat, though we all did all things to prevent him from attempting. He was shot here." Gunga Dass laid his hand on his lean stomach and bowed to the earth.

"Well, and what then? Go on!"

"And then—and then, Your Honour, we carried him into his house and gave him water, and put wet cloths on the wound, and he laid down in his house and gave up the ghost."

"In how long? In how long?"

"About half an hour after he received his wound. I call Vishnu to witness," yelled the wretched man, "that I did everything for him. Everything which was possible, that I did!"

He threw himself down on the ground and clasped my ankles. But I had my doubts about Gunga Dass's benevolence, and kicked him off as he lay protesting.

"I believe you robbed him of everything he had. But I can find out in a minute or two. How long was the Sahib here?"

"Nearly a year and a half. I think he must have gone mad. But hear me swear, Protector of the Poor! Won't Your Honor hear me swear that I never touched an article that belonged to him? What is Your Worship going to do?"

I had taken Gunga Dass by the waist and had hauled him on to the platform opposite the deserted burrow. As I did so I thought of my wretched fellow-prisoner's unspeakable misery among all these horrors for eighteen months, and the final agony of dying like a rat in a hole, with a bullet-wound in the stomach. Gunga Dass fancied I

was going to kill him, and howled pitifully. The rest of the population, in the plethora that follows a full flesh meal, watched us without stirring.

"Go inside, Gunga Dass," said I, "and fetch it out."

I was feeling sick and faint with horror now. Gunga Dass nearly rolled off the platform, and howled aloud.

"But I am Brahmin, Sahib—a high-caste Brahmin. By your soul, by your father's soul, do not make me do this thing!"

"Brahmin or no Brahmin, by my soul and my father's soul, in you go!" I said, and, seizing him by the shoulders, I crammed his head into the mouth of the burrow, kicked the rest of him in, and, sitting down, covered my face with my hands.

At the end of a few minutes I heard a rustle and a creak; then Gunga Dass in a sobbing, choking whisper speaking to himself; then a soft thud—and I uncovered my eyes.

The dry sand had turned the corpse entrusted to its keeping into a yellow-brown mummy. I told Gunga Dass to stand off while I examined it. The body—clad in an olive-green hunting-suit much stained and worn, with leather pads on the shoulders—was that of a man between thirty and forty, above middle height, with light, sandy hair, long moustache, and a rough, unkempt beard. The left canine of the upper jaw was missing,

and a portion of the lobe of the right ear was gone. On the second finger of the left hand was a ring—a shield-shaped blood-stone set in gold, with a monogram that might have been either "B. K." or "B. L." On the third finger of the right hand was a silver ring in the shape of a coiled cobra, much worn and tarnished. Gunga Dass deposited a handful of trifles he had picked out of the burrow at my feet, and, covering the face of the body with my handkerchief, I turned to examine these. I give the full list in the hope that it may lead to the identification of the unfortunate man:—

1. Bowl of a brierwood pipe, serrated at the edge; much worn and blackened; bound with string at the screw.

2. Two patent-lever keys; wards of both broken.

3. Tortoise-shell-handled penknife, silver or nickel, name-plate marked with monogram "B. K."

4. Envelope, postmark undecipherable, bearing a Victorian stamp, addressed to "Miss Mon——" (rest illegible)—"ham'—'nt."

5. Imitation crocodile-skin notebook with pencil. First forty-five pages blank; four and a half illegible; fifteen others filled with private memoranda relating chiefly to three persons—a Mrs. L. Singleton, abbreviated several times to "Lot Single," "Mrs. S. May," and "Garmison," referred to in places as "Jerry" or "Jack."

6. Handle of small-sized hunting-knife. Blade

snapped short. Buck's horn, diamond-cut, with swivel and ring on the butt; fragment of cotton cord attached.

It must not be supposed that I inventoried all these things on the spot as fully as I have here written them down. The notebook first attracted my attention, and I put it in my pocket with a view to studying it later on. The rest of the articles I conveyed to my burrow for safety's sake, and there, being a methodical man, I inventoried them. I then returned to the corpse and ordered Gunga Dass to help me to carry it out to the river-front. While we were engaged in this, the exploded shell of an old brown cartridge dropped out of one of the pockets and rolled at my feet. Gunga Dass had not seen it; and I fell to thinking that a man does not carry exploded cartridge-cases, especially "browns," which will not bear loading twice, about with him when shooting. In other words, that cartridge-case had been fired inside the crater. Consequently there must be a gun somewhere. I was on the verge of asking Gunga Dass, but checked myself, knowing that he would lie. We laid the body down on the edge of the quicksand by the tussocks. It was my intention to push it out and let it be swallowed up — the only possible mode of burial that I could think of. I ordered Gunga Dass to go away.

Then I gingerly put the corpse out on the

quicksand. In doing so—it was lying face downward—I tore the frail and rotten khaki shooting-coat open, disclosing a hideous cavity in the back. I have already told you that the dry sand had, as it were, mummified the body. A moment's glance showed that the gaping hole had been caused by a gunshot wound; the gun must have been fired with the muzzle almost touching the back. The shooting-coat, being intact, had been drawn over the body after death, which must have been instantaneous. The secret of the poor wretch's death was plain to me in a flash. Some one of the crater, presumably Gunga Dass, must have shot him with his own gun—the gun that fitted the brown cartridges. He had never attempted to escape in the face of the rifle-fire from the boat.

I pushed the corpse out hastily, and saw it sink from sight literally in a few seconds. I shuddered as I watched. In a dazed, half-conscious way I turned to peruse the notebook. A stained and discoloured slip of paper had been inserted between the binding and the back, and dropped out as I opened the pages. This is what it contained: "*Four out from crow-clump; three left; nine out; two right; three back; two left; fourteen out; two left, seven out; one left; nine back; two right; six back; four right; seven back.*" The paper had been burnt and charred at the edges. What it meant

I could not understand. I sat down on the dried bents, turning it over and over between my fingers, until I was aware of Gunga Dass standing immediately behind me with glowing eyes and outstretched hands.

"Have you got it?" he panted. "Will you not let me look at it also? I swear that I will return it."

"Got what? Return what?" I asked.

"That which you have in your hands. It will help us both." He stretched out his long, bird-like talons, trembling with eagerness.

"I could never find it," he continued. "He had secreted it about his person. Therefore I shot him, but nevertheless I was unable to obtain it."

Gunga Dass had quite forgotten his little fiction about the rifle-bullet. I heard him calmly. Morality is blunted by consorting with the Dead who are alive.

"What on earth are you raving about? What is it you want me to give you?"

"The piece of paper in the notebook. It will help us both. Oh, you fool! You fool! Can you not see what it will do for us? We shall escape!"

His voice rose almost to a scream, and he danced with excitement before me. I own I was moved at the chance of getting away.

"Do you mean to say that this slip of paper will help us? What does it mean?"

"Read it aloud! Read it aloud! I beg and I pray to you to read it aloud."

I did so. Gunga Dass listened delightedly, and drew an irregular line in the sand with his fingers.

"See now! It was the length of his gun-barrels without the stock. I have those barrels. Four gun-barrels out from the place where I caught crows. Straight out; do you mind me? Then three left. Ah! Now well I remember how that man worked it out night after night. Then nine out, and so on. Out is always straight before you across the quicksand to the North. He told me so before I killed him."

"But if you knew all this why didn't you get out before?"

"I did *not* know it. He told me that he was working it out a year and a half ago, and how he was working it out night after night when the boat had gone away, and he could get out near the quicksand safely. Then he said that we would get away together. But I was afraid that he would leave me behind one night when he had worked it all out, and so I shot him. Besides, it is not advisable that the men who once get in here should escape. Only I, and *I* am a Brahmin."

The hope of escape had brought Gunga Dass's caste back to him. He stood up, walked about, and gesticulated violently. Eventually I man-

aged to make him talk soberly, and he told me how this Englishman had spent six months night after night in exploring, inch by inch, the passage across the quicksand; how he had declared it to be simplicity itself up to within about twenty yards of the river-bank after turning the flank of the left horn of the horseshoe. This much he had evidently not completed when Gunga Dass shot him with his own gun.

In my frenzy of delight at the possibilities of escape I recollect shaking hands wildly with Gunga Dass, after we had decided that we were to make an attempt to get away that very night. It was weary work waiting throughout the afternoon.

About ten o'clock, as far as I could judge, when the Moon had just risen above the lip of the crater, Gunga Dass made a move for his burrow to bring out the gun-barrels whereby to measure our path. All the other wretched inhabitants had retired to their lairs long ago. The guardian boat had drifted down-stream some hours before, and we were utterly alone by the crow-clump. Gunga Dass, while carrying the gun-barrels, let slip the piece of paper which was to be our guide. I stooped down hastily to recover it, and, as I did so, I was aware that the creature was aiming a violent blow at the back of my head with the gun-barrels. It was too late to turn round. I

must have received the blow somewhere on the nape of my neck, for I fell senseless at the edge of the quicksand.

When I recovered consciousness, the Moon was going down, and I was sensible of intolerable pain in the back of my head. Gunga Dass had disappeared, and my mouth was full of blood. I lay down again and prayed that I might die without more ado. Then the unreasoning fury which I have before mentioned laid hold upon me, and I staggered inland towards the walls of the crater. It seemed that some one was calling to me in a whisper — "Sahib! Sahib! Sahib!" exactly as my bearer used to call me in the mornings. I fancied that I was delirious until a handful of sand fell at my feet. Then I looked up and saw a head peering down into the amphitheatre — the head of Dunnoo, my dog-boy, who attended to my collies. As soon as he had attracted my attention, he held up his hand and showed a rope. I motioned, staggering to and fro the while, that he should throw it down. It was a couple of leather punkah-ropes knotted together, with a loop at one end. I slipped the loop over my head and under my arms; heard Dunnoo urge something forward; was conscious that I was being dragged, face downward, up the steep sand-slope, and the next instant found myself choked and half-fainting on the sand-hills overlooking the crater. Dunnoo,

with his face ashy gray in the moonlight, implored me not to stay, but to get back to my tent at once.

It seems that he had tracked Pornic's footprints fourteen miles across the sands to the crater; had returned and told my servants, who flatly refused to meddle with any one, white or black, once fallen into the hideous Village of the Dead; whereupon Dunnoo had taken one of my ponies and a couple of punkah-ropes, returned to the crater, and hauled me out as I have described.

THE PIT THAT THEY DIGGED

Mr. Hawkins Mumrath, of Her Majesty's Bengal Civil Service, lay down to die of enteric fever; and, being a thorough-minded man, so nearly accomplished his purpose that all his friends, two doctors, and the Government he served gave him up for lost. Indeed, upon a false rumour the night before he rallied, several journals published very pleasant obituary notices, which, three weeks later, Mr. Mumrath sat up in bed and studied with interest. It is strange to read about yourself in the past tense, and soothing to discover that for all your faults, your world "might have spared a better man." When a Bengal civilian is tepid and harmless, newspapers always conclude their notices with this reflection. It entirely failed to amuse Mr. Mumrath.

The loving-kindness of the Government provides for the use of its servants in the East luxuries undreamed of by other civilizations. A State-paid doctor closed Mumrath's eyes—till Mumrath insisted upon opening them again; a subventionised undertaker bought Government timber

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for a Government coffin, and the great cemetery of St. Golgotha-in-Partibus prepared, according to regulation, a brick-lined grave, headed and edged, with masonry rests for the coffin. The cost of that grave was 175 rupees 14 annas, including the lease of the land in perpetuity. Very minute are the instructions of the Government for the disposal, wharfage, and demurrage of its dead; but the actual arrangements are not published in any appendix to pay and pension rules, for the same reason that led a Prussian officer not to leave his dead and wounded too long in the sight of a battery under fire.

Mr. Mumrath recovered and went about his work, to the disgust of his juniors who had hoped promotion from his decease. The undertaker sold the coffin, at a profit, to a fat Armenian merchant in Calcutta, and the State-paid doctor profited in practice by Mumrath's resurrection from the dead. The Cemetery of St. Golgotha-in-Partibus sat down by the head of the new-made grave with the beautiful brick lining, and waited for the corpse then signing despatches in an office three miles away. The yearly accounts were made up; and there remained over, unpaid for, one grave, cost 175 rupees 14 annas. The vouchers for all the other graves carried the name of a deceased servant of the Government. Only one space was blank in the column.

Then Ahutosh Lal Deb, Sub-deputy Assistant in the Accounts Department, being full of zeal for the State and but newly appointed to his important post, wrote officially to the Cemetery, desiring to know the inwardness of that grave, and "having the honour to be," etc. The Cemetery wrote officially that there was no inwardness at all, but a complete emptiness; said grave having been ordered for Mr. Hawkins Mumrath, and "had the honour to remain." Ahutosh Lal Deb had the honour to point out that, the grave being unused, the Government could by no means pay for it. The Cemetery wished to know if the account could be carried over to the next year, "pending anticipated taking-up of grave."

Ahutosh Lal Deb said that he was not going to have the accounts confused, Discrepancy was the soul of badinage and defalcations. The Cemetery would be good enough to adjust on the financial basis of that year.

The Cemetery wished they might be buried if they saw their way to doing it, and there really had been more than two thousand burned bricks put into the lining of the grave. Meantime, they complained, the Government Brickfield Audit was waiting until all material should have been paid for.

Ahutosh Lal Deb wrote: "Refer to Mr. Mumrath." The Cemetery referred semi-officially. It

struck them as being rather a delicate matter, but orders are orders.

Hawkins Mumrath wrote back, saying that he had the honour to be quite well, and not in the least in need of a grave, brick-lined or otherwise. He recommended the head of the Cemetery to get into that grave and stay there. The Cemetery forwarded the letter to Ahutosh Lal Deb, for reference and order.

Ahutosh Lal Deb forwarded it to the Provincial Government, who filed it behind a mass of other files and forgot all about it.

A fat she-cobra crawled into the neglected grave, and laid her eggs among the bricks. The Rains fell, and a little sprinkling of grass jewelled the brick floor.

The Cemetery wrote to Ahutosh Lal Deb, advising him that Mr. Mumrath had not paid for the grave, and requesting that the sum might be stopped from his monthly pay. Ahutosh Lal Deb sent the letter to Hawkins Mumrath as a reminder.

Hawkins Mumrath swore; but when he had sworn, he began to feel frightened. The enteric fever had destroyed his nerve. He wrote to the Accounts Department, protesting against the injustice of paying for a grave beforehand. Deductions for pension or widow's annuity were quite right, but this sort of deduction was an imposition besides being sarcastic.

Ahutosh Lal Deb wrote that Mr. Mumrath's style was not one usually employed in official correspondence, and requested him to modulate it and pay for the grave. Hawkins Mumrath tossed the letter into the fire, and wrote to the Provincial Government.

The Provincial Government had the honour to point out that the matter rested entirely between Mr. Hawkins Mumrath and the Accounts Department. They saw no reason to interfere till the money was actually deducted from the pay. In that eventuality, if Mr. Hawkins Mumrath appealed through the proper channels, he might, if the matter were properly reported upon, get a refund, less the cost of his last letter, which was under-stamped. The Cemetery wrote to Ahutosh Lal Deb, enclosing triplicate of grave-bill and demanding some sort of settlement.

Ahutosh Lal Deb deducted 175 rupees 14 annas from Mumrath's monthly pay. Mumrath appealed through the proper channels. The Provincial Government wrote that the expenses of all Government graves solely concerned the Supreme Government, to whom his letter had been forwarded.

Mumrath wrote to the Supreme Government. The Supreme Government had the honour to explain that the management of St. Golgotha-in-Partibus was under direct control of the Provin-

cial Government, to whom they had had the honour of forwarding his communication. Mumrath telegraphed to the Cemetery to this effect.

The Cemetery telegraphed: "Fiscal and finance, Supreme; management of internal affairs, Provincial Government. Refer Revenue and Agricultural Department for grave details."

Mumrath referred to the Revenue and Agricultural Department. That Department had the honour to make clear that it was only concerned in the plantation of trees round the Cemetery. The Forest Department controlled the reboisement of the edges of the paths.

Mumrath forwarded all the letters to Ahutosh Lal Deb, with a request for an immediate refund under "Rule 431 A, Supplementary Addenda, Bengal." He invented rule and reference *pro re nata*, having some knowledge of the workings of the Babu mind.

The crest of the Revenue and Agricultural Department frightened Ahutosh Lal Deb more than the reference. He bewilderedly granted the refund, and recouped the Government from the Cemetery Establishment allowance.

The Cemetery Establishment Executive Head wanted to know what Ahutosh Lal Deb meant.

The Accountant-General wanted to know what Ahutosh Lal Deb meant.

The Provincial Government wanted to know what Ahutosh Lal Deb meant.

The Revenue and Agriculture, the Forest Department, and the Government Harness Depot, which supplies the leather slings for the biers, all wanted to know what the deuce Ahutosh Lal Deb meant.

Ahutosh Lal Deb referred them severally to Mr. Hawkins Mumrath, who had driven out to chuckle over his victory all alone at the head of the brick-lined grave with the masonry foot-rests.

The she-cobra was sunning herself by the edge of the grave with her little ones about her, for the eggs had hatched out beautifully. Hawkins Mumrath stepped absently on the old lady's tail, and she bit him in the ankle.

Hawkins Mumrath drove home very quickly, and died in five hours and three-quarters.

Then Ahutosh Lal Deb passed the entry to "regular account," and there was peace in India.

THE DISTURBER OF TRAFFIC

From the wheel and the drift of Things
  Deliver us, good Lord,
And we will meet the wrath of kings,
  The faggot, and the sword.

Lay not Thy toil before our eyes,
  Nor vex us with Thy wars,
Lest we should feel the straining skies
  O'ertrod by trampling stars.

A veil 'twixt us and Thee, dread Lord,
  A veil 'twixt us and Thee:
Lest we should hear too clear, too clear,
  And unto madness see!

Miriam Cohen.

THE Brothers of the Trinity order that none unconnected with their service shall be found in or on one of their Lights during the hours of darkness; but their servants can be led to think otherwise. If you are fair-spoken and take an interest in their duties, they will allow you to sit with them through the long night and help to scare the ships into mid-channel.

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Of the English south-coast Lights, that of St. Cecilia-under-the-Cliff is the most powerful, for it guards a very foggy coast. When the sea-mist veils all, St. Cecilia turns a hooded head to the sea and sings a song of two words once every minute. From the land that song resembles the bellowing of a brazen bull; but off-shore they understand, and the steamers grunt gratefully in answer.

Fenwick, who was on duty one night, lent me a pair of black glass spectacles, without which no man can look at the Light unblinded, and busied himself in last touches to the lenses before twilight fell. The width of the English Channel beneath us lay as smooth and as many-coloured as the inside of an oyster-shell. A little Sunderland cargo-boat had made her signal to Lloyd's Agency, half a mile up the coast, and was lumbering down to the sunset, her wake lying white behind her. One star came out over the cliffs, the waters turned lead-colour, and St. Cecilia's Light shot out across the sea in eight long pencils that wheeled slowly from right to left, melted into one beam of solid light laid down directly in front of the tower, dissolved again into eight, and passed away. The light-frame of the thousand lenses circled on its rollers, and the compressed-air engine that drove it hummed like a blue-bottle under a glass. The hand of the indicator on the

wall pulsed from mark to mark. Eight pulse-beats timed one half-revolution of the Light; neither more nor less.

Fenwick checked the first few revolutions carefully; he opened the engine's feed-pipe a trifle, looked at the racing governor, and again at the indicator, and said: "She'll do for the next few hours. We've just sent our regular engine to London, and this spare one's not by any manner so accurate."

"And what would happen if the compressed air gave out?" I asked, from curiosity.

"We'd have to turn the flash by hand, keeping an eye on the indicator. There's a regular crank for that. But it hasn't happened yet. We'll need all our compressed air to-night."

"Why?" said I. I had been watching him for not more than a minute.

"Look," he answered, and I saw that the dead sea-mist had risen out of the lifeless sea and wrapped us while my back had been turned. The pencils of the Light marched staggeringly across tilted floors of white cloud. From the balcony round the light-room the white walls of the lighthouse ran down into swirling, smoking space. The noise of the tide coming in very lazily over the rocks was choked down to a thick drawl.

"That's the way our sea-fogs come," said Fen-

wick, with an air of ownership. "Hark, now, to that little fool calling out 'fore he's hurt."

Something in the mist was bleating like an indignant calf; it might have been half a mile or half a hundred miles away.

"Does he suppose we've gone to bed?" continued Fenwick. "You'll hear us talk to him in a minute. He knows puffickly where he is, and he's carrying on to be told like if he was insured."

"Who is 'he'?"

"That Sunderland boat, o' course. Ah!"

I could hear a steam-engine hiss down below in the mist where the dynamos that fed the Light were clacking together. Then there came a roar that split the fog and shook the lighthouse.

"GIT-*toot!*" blared the fog-horn of St. Cecilia. The bleating ceased.

"Little fool!" Fenwick repeated. Then, listening: "Blest if that aren't another of them! Well, well, they always say that a fog do draw the ships of the sea together. They'll be calling all night, and so'll the siren. We're expecting some tea ships up-Channel. . . . If you put my coat on that chair, you'll feel more so fash, sir."

It is no pleasant thing to thrust your company upon a man for the night. I looked at Fenwick, and Fenwick looked at me; each gauging the other's capacities for boring and being bored. Fenwick was an old, clean-shaven, gray-haired

man who had followed the sea for thirty years, and knew nothing of the land except the light-house in which he served. He fenced cautiously to find out the little that I knew, and talked down to my level till it came out that I had met a captain in the merchant service who had once commanded a ship in which Fenwick's son had served; and further, that I had seen some places that Fenwick had touched at. He began with a dissertation on pilotage in the Hugli. I had been privileged to know a Hugli pilot intimately. Fenwick had only seen the imposing and masterful breed from a ship's chains, and his intercourse had been cut down to "Quarter less five," and remarks of a strictly business-like nature. Hereupon he ceased to talk down to me, and became so amazingly technical that I was forced to beg him to explain every other sentence. This set him fully at his ease; and then we spoke as men together, each too interested to think of anything except the subject in hand. And that subject was wrecks, and voyages, and old-time trading, and ships cast away in desolate seas, steamers we both had known, their merits and demerits, lading, Lloyd's, and, above all, Lights. The talk always came back to Lights: Lights of the Channel; Lights on forgotten islands, and men forgotten on them; Light-ships — two months' duty and one month's leave — tossing on kinked cables in ever-troubled tide-

ways; and Lights that men had seen where never lighthouse was marked on the charts.

Omitting all those stories, and omitting also the wonderful ways by which he arrived at them, I tell here, from Fenwick's mouth, one that was not the least amazing. It was delivered in pieces between the roller-skate rattle of the revolving lenses, the bellowing of the fog-horn below, the answering calls from the sea, and the sharp tap of reckless night-birds that flung themselves at the glasses. It concerned a man called Dowse, once an intimate friend of Fenwick, now a waterman at Portsmouth, believing that the guilt of blood is on his head, and finding no rest either at Portsmouth or Gosport Hard.

. . . "And if anybody was to come to you and say, 'I know the Javva currents,' don't you listen to him; for those currents is never yet known to mortal man. Sometimes they're here, sometimes they're there, but they never runs less than five knots an hour through and among those islands of the Eastern Archipelagus. There's reverse currents in the Gulf of Boni — and that's up north in Celebes — that no man can explain; and through all those Javva passages from the Bali Narrows, Dutch Gut, and Ombay, which I take it is the safest, they chop and they change, and they banks the tides fust on one shore and then on an-

other, till your ship's tore in two. I've come through the Bali Narrows, stern first, in the heart o' the south-east monsoon, with a sou'-sou'-west wind blowing atop of the northerly flood, and our skipper said he wouldn't do it again, not for all Jamrach's. You've heard o' Jamrach's, sir?"

"Yes; and was Dowse stationed in the Bali Narrows?" I said.

"No, he was not at Bali, but much more east o' them passages, and that's Flores Strait, at the east end o' Flores. It's all on the way south to Australia when you're running through that Eastern Archipelagus. Sometimes you go through Bali Narrows if you're full-powered, and sometimes through Flores Strait, so as to stand south at once, and fetch round Timor, keeping well clear o' the Sahul Bank. Elseways, if you aren't full-powered, why it stands to reason you go round by the Ombay Passage, keeping careful to the north side. You understand that, sir?"

I was not full-powered, and judged it safer to keep to the north side — of Silence.

"And on Flores Strait, in the fairway between Adonare Island and the mainland, they put Dowse in charge of a screw-pile Light called the Wurlee Light. It's less than a mile across the head of Flores Strait. Then it opens out to ten or twelve mile for Solor Strait, and then it narrows again to

a three-mile gut, with a topplin' flamin' volcano by it. That's old Loby Toby by Loby Toby Strait, and if you keep his Light and the Wurlee Light in a line you won't take much harm, not on the darkest night. That's what Dowse told me, and I can well believe him, knowing these seas myself; but you must ever be mindful of the currents. And there they put Dowse, since he was the only man that that Dutch government which owns Flores could find that would go to Wurlee and tend a fixed Light. Mostly they uses Dutch and Italians, Englishmen being said to drink when alone. I never could rightly find out what made Dowse accept of that position, but accept he did, and used to sit for to watch the tigers come out of the forests to hunt for crabs and such like round about the lighthouse at low tide. The water was always warm in those parts, as I know well, and uncommon sticky, and it ran with the tides as thick and smooth as hogwash in a trough. There was another man along with Dowse in the Light, but he wasn't rightly a man. He was a Kling. No, nor yet a Kling he wasn't, but his skin was in little flakes and cracks all over, from living so much in the salt water as was his usual custom. His hands was all webby-foot, too. He was called, I remember Dowse saying now, an Orange-Lord, on account of his habits. You've heard of an Orange-Lord, sir?"

"Orang-Laut?" I suggested.

"That's the name," said Fenwick, smacking his knee. "An Orang-Laut, of course, and his name was Challong; what they call a sea-gypsy. Dowse told me that that man, long hair and all, would go swimming up and down the straits just for something to do; running down on one tide and back again with the other, swimming side-stroke, and the tides going tremenjus strong. Elseways he'd be skipping about the beach along with the tigers at low tide, for he was most part a beast; or he'd sit in a little boat praying to old Loby Toby of an evening when the volcano was spitting red at the south end of the strait. Dowse told me that he wasn't a companionable man, like you and me might have been to Dowse.

"Now I can never rightly come at what it was that began to ail Dowse after he had been there a year or something less. He was saving of all his pay and tending to his Light, and now and again he'd have a fight with Challong and tip him off the Light into the sea. Then, he told me, his head began to feel streaky from looking at the tide so long. He said there was long streaks of white running inside it; like wall-paper that hadn't been properly pasted up, he said. The streaks, they would run with the tides, north and south, twice a day, accordin' to them currents, and he'd lie down on the planking — it was a screw-

pile Light — with his eye to a crack and watch the water streaking through the piles just so quiet as hogwash. He said the only comfort he got was at slack water. Then the streaks in his head went round and round like a sampan in a tide-rip; but that was heaven, he said, to the other kind of streaks — the straight ones that looked like arrows on a wind-chart, but much more regular, and that was the trouble of it. No more he couldn't ever keep his eyes off the tides that ran up and down so strong, but as soon as ever he looked at the high hills standing all along Flores Strait for rest and comfort his eyes would be pulled down like to the nesty streaky water; and when they once got there he couldn't pull them away again till the tide changed. He told me all this himself, speaking just as though he was talking of somebody else."

"Where did you meet him?" I asked.

"In Portsmouth harbour, a-cleaning the brasses of a Ryde boat, but I'd known him off and on through following the sea for many years. Yes, he spoke about himself very curious, and all as if he was in the next room laying there dead. Those streaks, they preyed upon his intellecks, he said; and he made up his mind, every time that the Dutch gunboat that attends to the Lights in those parts come along, that he'd ask to be took off. But as soon as she did come something went click

in his throat, and he was so took up with watching her masts, because they ran longways, in the contrary direction to his streaks, that he could never say a word until she was gone away and her masts was under sea again. Then, he said, he'd cry by the hour; and Challong swum round and round the Light, laughin' at him and splashin' water with his webby-foot hands. At last he took it into his pore sick head that the ships, and particularly the steamers that came by,—there wasn't many of them,—made the streaks, instead of the tides as was natural. He used to sit, he told me, cursing every boat that come along,—sometimes a junk, sometimes a Dutch brig, and now and again a steamer rounding Flores Head and poking about in the mouth of the strait. Or there'd come a boat from Australia running north past old Loby Toby hunting for a fair current, but never throwing out any papers that Challong might pick up for Dowse to read. Generally speaking, the steamers kept more westerly, but now and again they came looking for Timor and the west coast of Australia. Dowse used to shout to them to go round by the Ombay Passage, and not to come streaking past him, making the water all streaky, but it wasn't likely they'd hear. He says to himself after a month, 'I'll give them one more chance,' he says. 'If the next boat don't attend to my just representations,'—he says he

remembers using those very words to Challong,—'I'll stop the fairway.'

"The next boat was a Two-streak cargo-boat very anxious to make her northing. She waddled through under old Loby Toby at the south end of the strait, and she passed within a quarter of a mile of the Wurlee Light at the north end, in seventeen fathom o' water, the tide against her. Dowse took the trouble to come out with Challong in a little prow that they had,—all bamboos and leakage,—and he lay in the fairway waving a palm branch, and, so he told me, wondering why and what for he was making this fool of himself. Up come the Two-streak boat, and Dowse shouts: 'Don't you come this way again, making my head all streaky! Go round by Ombay, and leave me alone.' Some one looks over the port bulwarks and shies a banana at Dowse, and that's all. Dowse sits down in the bottom of the boat and cries fit to break his heart. Then he says, 'Challong, what am I a-crying for?' nd they fetch up by the Wurlee Light on the half flood.

"'Challong,' he says, 'there's too much traffic here, and that's why the water's so streaky as it is. It's the junks and the brigs and the steamers that do it,' he says; and all the time he was speaking he was thinking, 'Lord, Lord, what a crazy fool I am!' Challong said nothing, because he couldn't speak a word of English except say 'dam,' and he

said that where you or me would say 'yes.' Dowse lay down on the planking of the Light with his eye to the crack, and he saw the muddy water streaking below, and he never said a word till slack water, because the streaks kept him tongue-tied at such times. At slack water he says, 'Challong, we must buoy this fairway for wrecks,' and he holds up his hands several times, showing that dozens of wrecks had come about in the fairway; and Challong says, 'Dam.'

"That very afternoon he and Challong goes to Wurlee, the village in the woods that the Light was named after, and buys canes,—stacks and stacks of canes, and coir-rope thick and fine, all sorts,—and they sets to work making square floats by lashing of the canes together. Dowse said he took longer over those floats than might have been needed, because he rejoiced in the corners, they being square, and the streaks in his head all running longways. He lashed the canes together, criss-cross and thwartways —any way but longways,—and they made up twelve-foot-square floats, like rafts. Then he stepped a twelve-foot bamboo or a bundle of canes in the centre, and to the head of that he lashed a big six-foot W letter, all made of canes, and painted the float dark-green and the W white, as a wreck-buoy should be painted. Between them two they makes a round dozen of these new kind of wreck-buoys, and it was a two

months' job. There was no big traffic, owing to it being on the turn of the monsoon, but what there was Dowse cursed at, and the streaks in his head, they ran with the tides, as usual.

"Day after day, so soon as a buoy was ready, Challong would take it out, with a big rock that half sunk the prow and a bamboo grapnel, and drop it dead in the fairway. He did this day or night, and Dowse could see him of a clear night, when the sea brimmed, climbing about the buoys with the sea-fire dripping off him. They was all put into place, twelve of them, in seventeen-fathom water; not in a straight line, on account of a well-known shoal there, but slantways, and two, one behind the other, mostly in the centre of the fairway. You must keep the centre of those Javva currents, for currents at the side is different, and in narrow water, before you can turn a spoke, you get your nose took round and rubbed upon the rocks and the woods. Dowse knew that just as well as any skipper. Likeways he knew that no skipper daren't run through uncharted wrecks in a six-knot current. He told me he used to lie outside the Light watching his buoys ducking and dipping so friendly with the tide; and the motion was comforting to him on account of its being different from the run of the streaks in his head.

"Three weeks after he'd done his business up comes a steamer through Loby Toby Straits, think-

ing she'd run into Flores Sea before night. He saw her slow down; then she backed. Then one man and another came up on the bridge, and he could see there was a regular powwow, and the flood was driving her right on to Dowse's wreck-buoys. After that she spun round and went back south, and Dowse nearly killed himself with laughing. But a few weeks after that a couple of junks came shouldering through from the north, arm in arm, like junks go. It takes a good deal to make a Chinaman understand danger. They junks set well in the current, and went down the fairway, right among the buoys, ten knots an hour, blowing horns and banging tin pots all the time. That made Dowse very angry, he having taken so much trouble to stop the fairway. No boats run Flores Straits by night, but it seemed to Dowse that if junks'd do that in the day, the Lord knew but what a steamer might trip over his buoys at night; and he sent Challong to run a coir rope between three of the buoys in the middle of the fairway, and he fixed naked lights of coir steeped in oil to that rope. The tides was the only things that moved in those seas, for the airs was dead still till they began to blow, and *then* they would blow your hair off. Challong tended those lights every night after the junks had been so impident,—four lights in about a quarter of a mile hung up in iron skillets on the rope; and when they was alight,—

and coir burns well, most like a lamp wick,—the fairway seemed more madder than anything else in the world. Fust there was the Wurlee Light, then these four queer lights, that couldn't be riding-lights, almost flush with the water, and behind them, twenty mile off, but the biggest light of all, there was the red top of old Loby Toby volcano. Dowse told me that he used to go out in the prow and look at his handiwork, and it made him scared, being like no lights that ever was fixed.

By and by some more steamers came along, snorting and snifting at the buoys, but never going through, and Dowse says to himself: "Thank goodness, I've taught them not to come streaking through my water. Ombay Passage is good enough for them and the like of them." But he didn't remember how quick that sort of news spreads among the shipping. Every steamer that fetched up by those buoys told another steamer and all the port officers concerned in those seas that there was something wrong with Flores Straits that hadn't been charted yet. It was block-buoyed for wrecks in the fairway, they said, and no sort of passage to use. Well, the Dutch, of course they didn't know anything about it. They thought our Admiralty Survey had been there, and they thought it very queer but neighbourly. You understand us English are always looking up marks and lighting sea-ways all the world over, never

asking with your leave or by your leave, seeing that the sea concerns us more than any one else. So the news went to and back from Flores to Bali, and Bali to Probolingo, where the railway is that runs to Batavia. All through the Javva seas everybody got the word to keep clear o' Flores Straits, and Dowse, he was left alone except for such steamers and small craft as didn't know. They'd come up and look at the straits like a bull over a gate, but those nodding wreck-buoys scared them away. By and by the Admiralty Survey ship — the *Britomarte* I think she was — lay in Macassar Roads off Fort Rotterdam, alongside of the *Amboina*, a dirty little Dutch gunboat that used to clean there; and the Dutch captain says to our captain, 'What's wrong with Flores Straits?' he says.

"'Blowed if I know,' says our captain, who'd just come up from the Angelica Shoal.

"'Then why did you go and buoy it?' says the Dutchman.

"'Blowed if I have,' says our captain. 'That's your lookout.'

"'Buoyed it is,' said the Dutch captain, 'according to what they tell me; and a whole fleet of wreck-buoys, too.'

"'Gummy!' says our captain. 'It's a dorg's life at sea, any way. I must have a look at this. You come along after me as soon as you can;'

and down he skimmed that very night, round the heel of Celebes, three days' steam to Flores Head, and he met a Two-streak liner, very angry, backing out of the head of the strait; and the merchant captain gave our Survey ship something of his mind for leaving wrecks uncharted in those narrow waters and wasting his company's coal.

"'It's no fault o' mine,' says our captain.

"'I don't care whose fault it is,' says the merchant captain, who had come aboard to speak to him just at dusk. 'The fairway's choked with wreck enough to knock a hole through a dock-gate. I saw their big ugly masts sticking up just under my forefoot. Lord ha' mercy on us!' he says, spinning round. 'The place is like Regent Street of a hot summer night.'

"And so it was. They two looked at Flores Straits, and they saw lights one after the other stringing across the fairway. Dowse, he had seen the steamers hanging there before dark, and he said to Challong: 'We'll give 'em something to remember. Get all the skillets and iron pots you can and hang them up alongside o' the regular four lights. We must teach 'em to go round by the Ombay Passage, or they'll be streaking up our water again!' Challong took a header off the lighthouse, got aboard the little leaking prow, with his coir soaked in oil and all the skillets he could muster, and he began to show his lights,

four regulation ones and half a dozen new lights hung on that rope which was a little above the water. Then he went to all the spare buoys with all his spare coir, and hung a skillet-flare on every pole that he could get at — about seven poles. So you see, taking one with another, there was the Wurlee Light, four lights on the rope between the three centre fairway wreck-buoys that was hung out as a usual custom, six or eight extry ones that Challong had hung up on the same rope, and seven dancing flares that belonged to seven wreck-buoys — eighteen or twenty lights in all crowded into a mile of seventeen-fathom water, where no tide'd ever let a wreck rest for three weeks, let alone ten or twelve wrecks, as the flares showed.

"The Admiralty captain, he saw the lights come out one after another, same as the merchant skipper did who was standing at his side, and he said: —

"'There's been an international catastrophe here or elseways,' and then he whistled. 'I'm going to stand on and off all night till the Dutchman comes,' he says.

"'I'm off,' says the merchant skipper. 'My owners don't wish for me to watch illuminations. That strait's choked with wreck, and I shouldn't wonder if a typhoon hadn't driven half the junks o' China there.' With that he went away; but

the Survey ship, she stayed all night at the head o' Flores Strait, and the men admired the lights till the lights was burning out, and then they admired more than ever.

"A little bit before morning the Dutch gunboat come flustering up, and the two ships stood together watching the lights burn out and out, till there was nothing left 'cept Flores Straits, all green and wet, and a dozen wreck-buoys, and Wurlee Light.

"Dowse had slept very quiet that night, and got rid of his streaks by means of thinking of the angry steamers outside. Challong was busy, and didn't come back to his bunk till late. In the very early morning Dowse looked out to sea, being, as he said, in torment, and saw all the navies of the world riding outside Flores Straits fairway in a half-moon, seven miles from wing to wing, most wonderful to behold. Those were the words he used to me time and again in telling the tale.

"Then, he says, he heard a gun fired with a most tremenjus explosion, and all them great navies crumbled to little pieces of clouds, and there was only two ships remaining, and a man-o'-war's boat rowing to the Light, with the oars going sideways instead o' longways as the morning tides, ebb or flow, would continually run.

"'What the devil's wrong with this strait?' says a man in the boat as soon as they was in hail-

ing distance. 'Has the whole English Navy sunk here, or what?'

"'There's nothing wrong,' says Dowse, sitting on the platform outside the Light, and keeping one eye very watchful on the streakiness of the tide, which he always hated 'specially in the morning. 'You leave me alone and I'll leave you alone. Go round by the Ombay Passage, and don't cut up my water. You're making it streaky.' All the time he was saying that he kept on thinking to himself, 'Now that's foolishness,—now that's nothing but foolishness;' and all the time he was holding tight to the edge of the platform in case the streakiness of the tide should carry him away.

"Somebody answers from the boat, very soft and quiet, 'We're going round by Ombay in a minute, if you'll just come and speak to our captain and give him his bearings.'

"Dowse, he felt very highly flattered, and he slipped into the boat, not paying any attention to Challong. But Challong swum along to the ship after the boat. When Dowse was in the boat, he found, so he says, he couldn't speak to the sailors 'cept to call them 'white mice with chains about their neck,' and Lord knows he hadn't seen or thought o' white mice since he was a little bit of a boy and kept 'em in his handkerchief. So he kept himself quiet, and so they come to the Survey

ship; and the man in the boat hails the quarter-deck with something that Dowse could not rightly understand, but there was one word he spelt out again and again,— m-a-d, mad,— and he heard some one behind him saying it backwards. So he had two words,— m-a-d, mad, d-a-m, dam; and he put those two words together as he come on the quarter-deck, and he says to the captain very slowly, 'I be damned if I am mad,' but all the time his eye was held like by the coils of rope on the belaying-pins, and he followed those ropes up and up with his eye till he was quite lost and comfortable among the rigging, which ran criss-cross, and slopeways, and up and down, and any way but straight along under his feet north and south. The deck-seams, they ran *that* way, and Dowse daresn't look at them. They was the same as the streaks of the water under the planking of the lighthouse.

"Then he heard the captain talking to him very kindly, and for the life of him he couldn't tell why; and what he wanted to tell the captain was that Flores Strait was too streaky, like bacon, and the steamers only made it worse; but all he could do was to keep his eye very careful on the rigging and sing:—

'I saw a ship a-sailing,
A-sailing on the sea;
And oh, it was all lading
With pretty things for me!'

Then he remembered that was foolishness, and he started off to say about the Ombay Passage, but all he said was: 'The captain was a duck,—meaning no offence to you, sir,—but there was something on his back that I've forgotten.

'And when the ship began to move
The captain says, "Quack-quack."'

"He noticed the captain turn very red and angry, and he says to himself, 'My foolish tongue's run away with me again. I'll go forward;' and he went forward, and catched the reflection of himself in the binnacle brasses; and he saw that he was standing there and talking mother-naked in front of all them sailors, and he ran into the fo'c's'le howling most grievous. He must ha' gone naked for weeks on the Light, and Challong o' course never noticed it. Challong was swimmin' round and round the ship, sayin' 'dam' for to please the men and to be took aboard, because he didn't know any better.

"Dowse didn't tell what happened after this, but seemingly our Survey ship lowered two boats and went over to Dowse's buoys. They took one sounding, and then finding it was all correct they cut the buoys that Dowse and Challong had made, and let the tide carry 'em out through the Loby Toby end of the strait; and the Dutch gunboat,

she sent two men ashore to take care o' the Wurlee Light, and the *Britomarte*, she went away with Dowse, leaving Challong to try to follow them, a-calling 'dam—dam' all among the wake of the screw, and half heaving himself out of water and joining his webby-foot hands together. He dropped astern in five minutes, and I suppose he went back to the Wurlee Light. You can't drown an Orange-Lord, not even in Flores Strait on flood-tide.

"Dowse come across me when he came to England with the Survey ship, after being more than six months in her, and cured of his streaks by working hard and not looking over the side more than he could help. He told me what I've told you, sir, and he was very much ashamed of himself: but the trouble on his mind was to know whether he hadn't sent something or other to the bottom with his buoyings and his lightings and such like. He put it to me many times, and each time more and more sure he was that something had happened in the straits because of him. I think that distructed him, because I found him up at Fratton one day, in a red jersey, a-praying before the Salvation Army, which had produced him in their papers as a Reformed Pirate. They knew from his mouth that he had committed evil on the deep waters,—that was what he told them, —and piracy, which no one does now except

Chineses, was all they knew of. I says to him: 'Dowse, don't be a fool. Take off that jersey and come along with me.' He says: 'Fenwick, I'm a-saving of my soul; for I do believe that I have killed more men in Flores Strait than Trafalgar.' I says: 'A man that thought he'd seen all the navies of the earth standing round in a ring to watch his foolish false wreck-buoys' (those was my very words I used) 'ain't fit to have a soul, and if he did he couldn't kill a flea with it. John Dowse, you was mad then, but you are a damn sight madder now. Take off that there jersey.'

"He took it off and come along with me, but he never got rid o' that suspicion that he'd sunk some ships a-cause of his foolishnesses at Flores Straits; and now he's a wherryman from Portsmouth to Gosport, where the tides run crossways and you can't row straight for ten strokes together. . . . So late as all this! Look!"

Fenwick left his chair, passed to the Light, touched something that clicked, and the glare ceased with a suddenness that was pain. Day had come, and the Channel needed St. Cecilia no longer. The sea-fog rolled back from the cliffs in trailed wreaths and dragged patches, as the sun rose and made the dead sea alive and splendid. The stillness of the morning held us both silent as we stepped on the balcony. A lark went

up from the cliffs behind St. Cecilia, and we smelt a smell of cows in the lighthouse pastures below.

So you see we were both at liberty to thank the Lord for another day of clean and wholesome life.

THE RETURN OF IMRAY

> The doors were wide, the story saith,
> Out of the night came the patient wraith,
> He might not speak, and he could not stir
> A hair of the Baron's minniver —
> Speechless and strengthless, a shadow thin,
> He roved the castle to seek his kin.
> And oh, 'twas a piteous thing to see
> The dumb ghost follow his enemy!
>
> *The Baron.*

IMRAY achieved the impossible. Without warning, for no conceivable motive, in his youth, at the threshold of his career, he chose to disappear from the world—which is to say, the little Indian station where he lived.

Upon a day he was alive, well, happy, and in great evidence among the billiard-tables at his Club. Upon a morning, he was not, and no manner of search could make sure where he might be. He had stepped out of his place; he had not appeared at his office at the proper time, and his dog-cart was not upon the public roads. For these reasons, and because he was hampering, in a microscopical degree, the administration of the Indian Empire, that Empire paused for one microscopical

moment to make inquiry into the fate of Imray. Ponds were dragged, wells were plumbed, telegrams were despatched down the lines of railways and to the nearest seaport town—twelve hundred miles away; but Imray was not at the end of the drag-ropes nor the telegraph wires. He was gone, and his place knew him no more. Then the work of the great Indian Empire swept forward, because it could not be delayed, and Imray from being a man became a mystery—such a thing as men talk over at their tables in the Club for a month, and then forget utterly. His guns, horses, and carts were sold to the highest bidder. His superior officer wrote an altogether absurd letter to his mother, saying that Imray had unaccountably disappeared, and his bungalow stood empty.

After three or four months of the scorching hot weather had gone by, my friend Strickland, of the Police, saw fit to rent the bungalow from the native landlord. This was before he was engaged to Miss Youghal—an affair which has been described in another place—and while he was pursuing his investigations into native life. His own life was sufficiently peculiar, and men complained of his manners and customs. There was always food in his house, but there were no regular times for meals. He ate, standing up and walking about, whatever he might find at the sideboard, and this is not good for human beings. His do-

mestic equipment was limited to six rifles, three shot-guns, five saddles, and a collection of stiff-jointed mahseer-rods, bigger and stronger than the largest salmon-rods. These occupied one-half of his bungalow, and the other half was given up to Strickland and his dog Tietjens — an enormous Rampur slut who devoured daily the rations of two men. She spoke to Strickland in a language of her own; and whenever, walking abroad, she saw things calculated to destroy the peace of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress, she returned to her master and laid information. Strickland would take steps at once, and the end of his labours was trouble and fine and imprisonment for other people. The natives believed that Tietjens was a familiar spirit, and treated her with the great reverence that is born of hate and fear. One room in the bungalow was set apart for her special use. She owned a bedstead, a blanket, and a drinking-trough, and if any one came into Strickland's room at night her custom was to knock down the invader and give tongue till someone came with a light. Strickland owed his life to her, when he was on the Frontier, in search of a local murderer, who came in the gray dawn to send Strickland much farther than the Andaman Islands. Tietjens caught the man as he was crawling into Strickland's tent with a dagger between his teeth; and after his record of iniquity was established in

the eyes of the law he was hanged. From that date Tietjens wore a collar of rough silver, and employed a monogram on her night-blanket; and the blanket was of double woven Kashmir cloth, for she was a delicate dog.

Under no circumstances would she be separated from Strickland; and once, when he was ill with fever, made great trouble for the doctors, because she did not know how to help her master and would not allow another creature to attempt aid. Macarnaght, of the Indian Medical Service, beat her over her head with a gun-butt before she could understand that she must give room for those who could give quinine.

A short time after Strickland had taken Imray's bungalow, my business took me through that Station, and naturally, the Club quarters being full, I quartered myself upon Strickland. It was a desirable bungalow, eight-roomed and heavily thatched against any chance of leakage from rain. Under the pitch of the roof ran a ceiling-cloth which looked just as neat as a white-washed ceiling. The landlord had repainted it when Strickland took the bungalow. Unless you knew how Indian bungalows were built you would never have suspected that above the cloth lay the dark three-cornered cavern of the roof, where the beams and the underside of the thatch harboured all manner of rats, bats, ants, and foul things.

Tietjens met me in the verandah with a bay like the boom of the bell of St. Paul's, putting her paws on my shoulder to show she was glad to see me. Strickland had contrived to claw together a sort of meal which he called lunch, and immediately after it was finished went out about his business. I was left alone with Tietjens and my own affairs. The heat of the summer had broken up and turned to the warm damp of the rains. There was no motion in the heated air, but the rain fell like ramrods on the earth, and flung up a blue mist when it splashed back. The bamboos, and the custard-apples, the poinsettias, and the mango-trees in the garden stood still while the warm water lashed through them, and the frogs began to sing among the aloe hedges. A little before the light failed, and when the rain was at its worst, I sat in the back verandah and heard the water roar from the eaves, and scratched myself because I was covered with the thing called prickly-heat. Tietjens came out with me and put her head in my lap and was very sorrowful; so I gave her biscuits when tea was ready, and I took tea in the back verandah on account of the little coolness found there. The rooms of the house were dark behind me. I could smell Strickland's saddlery and the oil on his guns, and I had no desire to sit among these things. My own servant came to me in the twilight, the muslin of

his clothes clinging tightly to his drenched body, and told me that a gentleman had called and wished to see some one. Very much against my will, but only because of the darkness of the rooms, I went into the naked drawing-room, telling my man to bring the lights. There might or might not have been a caller waiting — it seemed to me that I saw a figure by one of the windows — but when the lights came there was nothing save the spikes of the rain without, and the smell of the drinking earth in my nostrils. I explained to my servant that he was no wiser than he ought to be, and went back to the verandah to talk to Tietjens. She had gone out into the wet, and I could hardly coax her back to me, even with biscuits with sugar tops. Strickland came home, dripping wet, just before dinner, and the first thing he said was,

"Has any one called?"

I explained, with apologies, that my servant had summoned me into the drawing-room on a false alarm; or that some loafer had tried to call on Strickland, and thinking better of it, had fled after giving his name. Strickland ordered dinner, without comment, and since it was a real dinner, with a white tablecloth attached, we sat down.

At nine o'clock Strickland wanted to go to bed, and I was tired too. Tietjens, who had been lying underneath the table, rose up, and swung into the least exposed verandah as soon as her master moved

to his own room, which was next to the stately chamber set apart for Tietjens. If a mere wife had wished to sleep out of doors in that pelting rain it would not have mattered; but Tietjens was a dog, and therefore the better animal. I looked at Strickland, expecting to see him flay her with a whip. He smiled queerly, as a man would smile after telling some unpleasant domestic tragedy. "She has done this ever since I moved in here," said he. "Let her go."

The dog was Strickland's dog, so I said nothing, but I felt all that Strickland felt in being thus made light of. Tietjens encamped outside my bedroom window, and storm after storm came up, thundered on the thatch, and died away. The lightning spattered the sky as a thrown egg spatters a barn-door, but the light was pale blue, not yellow; and, looking through my split bamboo blinds, I could see the great dog standing, not sleeping, in the verandah, the hackles alift on her back, and her feet anchored as tensely as the drawn wire-rope of a suspension-bridge. In the very short pauses of the thunder I tried to sleep, but it seemed that some one wanted me very urgently. He, whoever he was, was trying to call me by name, but his voice was no more than a husky whisper. The thunder ceased, and Tietjens went into the garden and howled at the low moon. Somebody tried to open my door, walked about and about through

the house, and stood breathing heavily in the verandahs; and just when I was falling asleep I fancied that I heard a wild hammering and clamouring above my head or on the door.

I ran into Strickland's room and asked him whether he was ill and had been calling for me. He was lying on his bed half dressed, a pipe in his mouth. "I thought you'd come," he said. "Have I been walking round the house recently?"

I explained that he had been tramping in the dining-room and the smoking-room and two or three other places; and he laughed and told me to go back to bed. I went back to bed and slept till the morning, but through all my mixed dreams I was sure I was doing some one an injustice in not attending to his wants. What those wants were I could not tell; but a fluttering, whispering, bolt-fumbling, lurking, loitering Someone was reproaching me for my slackness, and, half awake, I heard the howling of Tietjens in the garden and the threshing of the rain.

I lived in that house for two days. Strickland went to his office daily, leaving me alone for eight or ten hours with Tietjens for my only companion. As long as the full light lasted I was comfortable, and so was Tietjens; but in the twilight she and I moved into the back verandah and cuddled each other for company. We were alone in the house, but none the less it was much too fully

occupied by a tenant with whom I did not wish to interfere. I never saw him, but I could see the curtains between the rooms quivering where he had just passed through; I could hear the chairs creaking as the bamboos sprung under a weight that had just quitted them; and I could feel when I went to get a book from the dining-room that somebody was waiting in the shadows of the front verandah till I should have gone away. Tietjens made the twilight more interesting by glaring into the darkened rooms with every hair erect, and following the motions of something that I could not see. She never entered the rooms, but her eyes moved interestedly: that was quite sufficient. Only when my servant came to trim the lamps and make all light and habitable she would come in with me and spend her time sitting on her haunches, watching an invisible extra man as he moved about behind my shoulder. Dogs are cheerful companions.

I explained to Strickland, gently as might be, that I would go over to the Club and find for myself quarters there. I admired his hospitality, was pleased with his guns and rods, but I did not much care for his house and its atmosphere. He heard me out to the end, and then smiled very wearily, but without contempt, for he is a man who understands things. "Stay on," he said, "and see what this thing means. All you have

talked about I have known since I took the bungalow. Stay on and wait. Tietjens has left me. Are you going too?"

I had seen him through one little affair, connected with a heathen idol, that had brought me to the doors of a lunatic asylum, and I had no desire to help him through further experiences. He was a man to whom unpleasantnesses arrived as do dinners to ordinary people.

Therefore I explained more clearly than ever that I liked him immensely, and would be happy to see him in the daytime; but that I did not care to sleep under his roof. This was after dinner, when Tietjens had gone out to lie in the verandah.

"'Pon my soul, I don't wonder," said Strickland, with his eyes on the ceiling-cloth. "Look at that!"

The tails of two brown snakes were hanging between the cloth and the cornice of the wall. They threw long shadows in the lamplight.

"If you are afraid of snakes of course—" said Strickland.

I hate and fear snakes, because if you look into the eyes of any snake you will see that it knows all and more of the mystery of man's fall, and that it feels all the contempt that the Devil felt when Adam was evicted from Eden. Besides which, its bite is generally fatal, and it twists up trouser legs.

"You ought to get your thatch overhauled,"

I said. "Give me a mahseer-rod, and we'll poke 'em down."

"They'll hide among the roof-beams," said Strickland. "I can't stand snakes overhead. I'm going up into the roof. If I shake 'em down, stand by with a cleaning-rod and break their backs."

I was not anxious to assist Strickland in his work, but I took the cleaning-rod and waited in the dining-room, while Strickland brought a gardener's ladder from the verandah, and set it against the side of the room. The snake-tails drew themselves up and disappeared. We could hear the dry rushing scuttle of long bodies running over the baggy ceiling-cloth. Strickland took a lamp with him, while I tried to make clear to him the danger of hunting roof-snakes between a ceiling-cloth and a thatch, apart from the deterioration of property caused by ripping out ceiling-cloths.

"Nonsense!" said Strickland. "They're sure to hide near the walls by the cloth. The bricks are too cold for 'em, and the heat of the room is just what they like." He put his hand to the corner of the stuff and ripped it from the cornice. It gave with a great sound of tearing, and Strickland put his head through the opening into the dark of the angle of the roof-beams. I set my teeth and lifted the rod, for I had not the least knowledge of what might descend.

"H'm!" said Strickland, and his voice rolled

and rumbled in the roof. "There's room for another set of rooms up here, and, by Jove, some one is occupying 'em!"

"Snakes?" I said from below.

"No. It's a buffalo. Hand me up the two last joints of a mahseer-rod, and I'll prod it. It's lying on the main roof-beam."

I handed up the rod.

"What a nest for owls and serpents! No wonder the snakes live here," said Strickland, climbing farther into the roof. I could see his elbow thrusting with the rod. "Come out of that, whoever you are! Heads below there! It's falling."

I saw the ceiling-cloth nearly in the centre of the room bag with a shape that was pressing it downwards and downwards towards the lighted lamp on the table. I snatched the lamp out of danger and stood back. Then the cloth ripped out from the walls, tore, split, swayed, and shot down upon the table something that I dared not look at till Strickland had slid down the ladder and was standing by my side.

He did not say much, being a man of few words; but he picked up the loose end of the tablecloth and threw it over the remnants on the table.

"It strikes me," said he, putting down the lamp, "our friend Imray has come back. Oh! you would, would you?"

There was a movement under the cloth, and a little snake wriggled out, to be back-broken by the butt of the mahseer-rod. I was sufficiently sick to make no remarks worth recording.

Strickland meditated, and helped himself to drinks. The arrangement under the cloth made no more signs of life.

"Is it Imray?" I said.

Strickland turned back the cloth for a moment, and looked.

"It is Imray," he said; "and his throat is cut from ear to ear."

Then we spoke, both together and to ourselves: "That's why he whispered about the house."

Tietjens, in the garden, began to bay furiously. A little later her great nose heaved open the dining-room door.

She snuffed and was still. The tattered ceiling-cloth hung down almost to the level of the table, and there was hardly room to move away from the discovery.

Tietjens came in and sat down, her teeth bared under her lip and her forepaws planted. She looked at Strickland.

"It's a bad business, old lady," said he. "Men don't climb up into the roofs of their bungalows to die, and they don't fasten up the ceiling-cloth behind 'em. Let's think it out."

"Let's think it out somewhere else," I said.

"Excellent idea! Turn the lamps out. We'll get into my room."

I did not turn the lamps out. I went into Strickland's room first, and allowed him to make the darkness. Then he followed me, and we lit tobacco and thought. Strickland thought. I smoked furiously, because I was afraid.

"Imray is back," said Strickland. "The question is — who killed Imray? Don't talk, I've a notion of my own. When I took this bungalow I took over most of Imray's servants. Imray was guileless and inoffensive, wasn't he?"

I agreed; though the heap under the cloth had looked neither one thing nor the other.

"If I call in all the servants they will stand fast in a crowd and lie like Aryans. What do you suggest?"

"Call 'em in one by one," I said.

"They'll run away and give the news to all their fellows," said Strickland. "We must segregate 'em. Do you suppose your servant knows anything about it?"

"He may, for aught I know; but I don't think it's likely. He has only been here two or three days," I answered. "What's your notion?"

"I can't quite tell. How the dickens did the man get the wrong side of the ceiling-cloth?"

There was a heavy coughing outside Strickland's bedroom door. This showed that Bahadur Khan,

his body-servant, had waked from sleep and wished to put Strickland to bed.

"Come in," said Strickland. "It's a very warm night, isn't it?"

Bahadur Khan, a great, green-turbaned, six-foot Mahomedan, said that it was a very warm night; but that there was more rain pending, which, by his Honour's favour, would bring relief to the country.

"It will be so, if God pleases," said Strickland, tugging off his boots. "It is in my mind, Bahadur Khan, that I have worked thee remorselessly for many days — ever since that time when thou first camest into my service. What time was that?"

"Has the Heaven-born forgotten? It was when Imray Sahib went secretly to Europe without warning given; and I — even I — came into the honoured service of the protector of the poor."

"And Imray Sahib went to Europe?"

"It is so said among those who were his servants."

"And thou wilt take service with him when he returns?"

"Assuredly, Sahib. He was a good master, and cherished his dependants."

"That is true. I am very tired, but I go buck-shooting to-morrow. Give me the little sharp rifle that I use for black-buck; it is in the case yonder."

The man stooped over the case; handed barrels, stock, and fore-end to Strickland, who fitted all together, yawning dolefully. Then he reached down to the gun-case, took a solid-drawn cartridge, and slipped it into the breech of the ·360 Express.

"And Imray Sahib has gone to Europe secretly! That is very strange, Bahadur Khan, is it not?"

"What do I know of the ways of the white man, Heaven-born?"

"Very little, truly. But thou shalt know more anon. It has reached me that Imray Sahib has returned from his so long journeyings, and that even now he lies in the next room, waiting his servant."

"Sahib!"

The lamplight slid along the barrels of the rifle as they levelled themselves at Bahadur Khan's broad breast.

"Go and look!" said Strickland. "Take a lamp. Thy master is tired, and he waits thee. Go!"

The man picked up a lamp and went into the dining-room, Strickland following, and almost pushing him with the muzzle of the rifle. He looked for a moment at the black depths behind the ceiling-cloth; at the writhing snake under foot; and last, a gray glaze settling on his face, at the thing under the tablecloth.

"Hast thou seen?" said Strickland after a pause.

"I have seen. I am clay in the white man's hands. What does the Presence do?"

"Hang thee within the month. What else?"

"For killing him? Nay, Sahib, consider. Walking among us, his servants, he cast his eyes upon my child, who was four years old. Him he bewitched, and in ten days he died of the fever—my child!"

"What said Imray Sahib?"

"He said he was a handsome child, and patted him on the head; wherefore my child died. Wherefore I killed Imray Sahib in the twilight, when he had come back from office, and was sleeping. Wherefore I dragged him up into the roof-beams and made all fast behind him. The Heaven-born knows all things. I am the servant of the Heaven-born."

Strickland looked at me above the rifle, and said, in the vernacular, "Thou art witness to this saying? He has killed."

Bahadur Khan stood ashen gray in the light of the one lamp. The need for justification came upon him very swiftly. "I am trapped," he said, "but the offence was that man's. He cast an evil eye upon my child, and I killed and hid him. Only such as are served by devils," he glared at Tietjens, couched stolidly before him, "only such could know what I did."

"It was clever. But thou shouldst have lashed

The Return of Imray

him to the beam with a rope. Now, thou thyself wilt hang by a rope. Orderly!"

A drowsy policeman answered Strickland's call. He was followed by another, and Tietjens sat wondrous still.

"Take him to the police-station," said Strickland. "There is a case toward."

"Do I hang, then?" said Bahadur Khan, making no attempt to escape, and keeping his eyes on the ground.

"If the sun shines or the water runs — yes!" said Strickland.

Bahadur Khan stepped back one long pace, quivered, and stood still. The two policemen waited further orders.

"Go!" said Strickland.

"Nay; but I go very swiftly," said Bahadur Khan. "Look! I am even now a dead man."

He lifted his foot, and to the little toe there clung the head of the half-killed snake, firm fixed in the agony of death.

"I come of land-holding stock," said Bahadur Khan, rocking where he stood. "It were a disgrace to me to go to the public scaffold: therefore I take this way. Be it remembered that the Sahib's shirts are correctly enumerated, and that there is an extra piece of soap in his wash-basin. My child was bewitched, and I slew the wizard.

Why should you seek to slay me with the rope? My honour is saved, and — and — I die."

At the end of an hour he died, as they die who are bitten by the little brown *karait*, and the policemen bore him and the thing under the tablecloth to their appointed places. All were needed to make clear the disappearance of Imray.

"This," said Strickland, very calmly, as he climbed into bed, "is called the nineteenth century. Did you hear what that man said?"

"I heard," I answered. "Imray made a mistake."

"Simply and solely through not knowing the nature of the Oriental, and the coincidence of a little seasonal fever. Bahadur Khan had been with him for four years."

I shuddered. My own servant had been with me for exactly that length of time. When I went over to my own room I found my man waiting, impassive as the copper head on a penny, to pull off my boots.

"What has befallen Bahadur Khan?" said I.

"He was bitten by a snake and died. The rest the Sahib knows," was the answer.

"And how much of this matter hast thou known?"

"As much as might be gathered from One coming in in the twilight to seek satisfaction. Gently, Sahib. Let me pull off those boots."

I had just settled to the sleep of exhaustion when I heard Strickland shouting from his side of the house —

"Tietjens has come back to her place!"

And so she had. The great deerhound was couched statelily on her own bedstead on her own blanket, while, in the next room, the idle, empty ceiling-cloth waggled as it trailed on the table.

MY OWN TRUE GHOST STORY

As I came through the Desert thus it was —
As I came through the Desert.
The City of Dreadful Night.

THIS story deals entirely with ghosts. There are, in India, ghosts who take the form of fat, cold, pobby corpses, and hide in trees near the roadside till a traveller passes. Then they drop upon his neck and remain. There are also terrible ghosts of women who have died in childbed. These wander along the pathways at dusk, or hide in the crops near a village, and call seductively. But to answer their call is death in this world and the next. Their feet are turned backwards that all sober men may recognise them. There are ghosts of little children who have been thrown into wells. These haunt well-curbs and the fringes of jungles, and wail under the stars, or catch women by the wrist and beg to be taken up and carried. These and the corpse-ghosts, however, are only vernacular articles and do not attack Sahibs. No native ghost has yet been authentically reported to have frightened an Englishman; but

many English ghosts have scared the life out of both white and black.

Nearly every other Station owns a ghost. There are said to be two at Simla, not counting the woman who blows the bellows at Syree dâk-bungalow on the Old Road; Mussoorie has a house haunted by a very lively Thing; a White Lady is supposed to do night-watchman round a house in Lahore; Dalhousie says that one of her houses "repeats" on autumn evenings all the incidents of a horrible horse-and-precipice accident; Murree has a merry ghost, and, now that she has been swept by cholera, will have room for a sorrowful one; there are Officers' Quarters in Mian Mir whose doors open without reason, and whose furniture is guaranteed to creak, not with the heat of June, but with the weight of Invisibles who come to lounge in the chairs; Peshawur possesses houses that none will willingly rent; and there is something — not fever — wrong with a big bungalow in Allahabad. The older Provinces simply bristle with haunted houses, and march phantom armies along their main thoroughfares.

Some of the dâk-bungalows on the Grand Trunk Road have handy little cemeteries in their compound — witnesses to the "changes and chances of this mortal life" in the days when men drove from Calcutta to the Northwest. These bunga-

lows are objectionable places to put up in. They are generally very old, always dirty, while the *khansamah* is as ancient as the bungalow. He either chatters senilely, or falls into the long trances of age. In both moods he is useless. If you get angry with him, he refers to some Sahib dead and buried these thirty years, and says that when he was in that Sahib's service not a *khansamah* in the Province could touch him. Then he jabbers and mows and trembles and fidgets among the dishes, and you repent of your irritation.

Not long ago it was my business to live in dâk-bungalows. I never inhabited the same house for three nights running, and grew to be learned in the breed. I lived in Government-built ones with red brick walls and rail ceilings, an inventory of the furniture posted in every room, and an excited cobra on the threshold to give welcome. I lived in "converted" ones — old houses officiating as dâk-bungalows — where nothing was in its proper place and there was not even a fowl for dinner. I lived in second-hand palaces where the wind blew through open-work marble tracery just as uncomfortably as through a broken pane. I lived in dâk-bungalows where the last entry in the visitors' book was fifteen months old, and where they slashed off the curry-kid's head with a sword. It was my good-luck to meet all sorts of men, from sober travelling missionaries and deserters flying from

British Regiments, to drunken loafers who threw whiskey-bottles at all who passed; and my still greater good-fortune just to escape a maternity case. Seeing that a fair proportion of the tragedy of our lives in India acted itself in dâk-bungalows, I wondered that I had met no ghosts. A ghost that would voluntarily hang about a dâk-bungalow would be mad of course; but so many men have died mad in dâk-bungalows that there must be a fair percentage of lunatic ghosts.

In due time I found my ghost, or ghosts rather, for there were two of them.

We will call the bungalow Katmal dâk-bungalow; but *that* was the smallest part of the horror. A man with a sensitive hide has no right to sleep in dâk-bungalows. He should marry. Katmal dâk-bungalow was old and rotten and unrepaired. The floor was of worn brick, the walls were filthy, and the windows were nearly black with grime. It stood on a bypath largely used by native Sub-Deputy Assistants of all kinds, from Finance to Forests; but real Sahibs were rare. The *khansamah*, who was nearly bent double with old age, said so.

When I arrived, there was a fitful, undecided rain on the face of the land, accompanied by a restless wind, and every gust made a noise like the rattling of dry bones in the stiff toddy-palms outside. The *khansamah* completely lost his head

on my arrival. He had served a Sahib once. Did I know that Sahib? He gave me the name of a well-known man who has been buried for more than a quarter of a century, and showed me an ancient daguerreotype of that man in his prehistoric youth. I had seen a steel-engraving of him at the head of a double volume of Memoirs a month before, and I felt ancient beyond telling.

The day shut in and the *khansamah* went to get me food. He did not go through the pretence of calling it "*khana*"—man's victuals. He said "*ratub*," and that means, among other things, "grub"—dog's rations. There was no insult in his choice of the term. He had forgotten the other word, I suppose.

While he was cutting up the dead bodies of animals, I settled myself down, after exploring the dâk-bungalow. There were three rooms, beside my own, which was a corner kennel, each giving into the other through dingy white doors fastened with long iron bars. The bungalow was a very solid one, but the partition-walls of the rooms were almost jerry-built in their flimsiness. Every step or bang of a trunk echoed from my room down the other three, and every footfall came back tremulously from the far walls. For this reason I shut the door. There were no lamps—only candles in long glass shades. An oil wick was set in the bathroom.

For bleak, unadulterated misery that dâk-bungalow was the worst of the many that I had ever set foot in. There was no fireplace, and the windows would not open; so a brazier of charcoal would have been useless. The rain and the wind splashed and gurgled and moaned round the house, and the toddy-palms rattled and roared. Half a dozen jackals went through the compound singing, and a hyena stood afar off and mocked them. A hyena would convince a Sadducee of the Resurrection of the Dead — the worst sort of Dead. Then came the *ratub* — a curious meal, half native and half English in composition — with the old *khansamah* babbling behind my chair about dead and gone English people, and the wind-blown candles playing shadow-bo-peep with the bed and the mosquito-curtains. It was just the sort of dinner and evening to make a man think of every single one of his past sins, and of all the others that he intended to commit if he lived.

Sleep, for several hundred reasons, was not easy. The lamp in the bathroom threw the most absurd shadows into the room, and the wind was beginning to talk nonsense.

Just when the reasons were drowsy with blood-sucking I heard the regular — "Let-us-take-and-heave-him-over" grunt of doolie-bearers in the compound. First one doolie came in, then a

second, and then a third. I heard the doolies dumped on the ground, and the shutter in front of my door shook.

"That's some one trying to come in," I said. But no one spoke, and I persuaded myself that it was the gusty wind. The shutter of the room next to mine was attacked, flung back, and the inner door opened. "That's some Sub-Deputy Assistant," I said, "and he has brought his friends with him. Now they'll talk and spit and smoke for an hour."

But there were no voices and no footsteps. No one was putting his luggage into the next room. The door shut, and I thanked Providence that I was to be left in peace. But I was curious to know where the doolies had gone. I got out of bed and looked into the darkness. There was never a sign of a doolie. Just as I was getting into bed again, I heard, in the next room, the sound that no man in his senses can possibly mistake — the whirr of a billiard-ball down the length of the slate when the striker is stringing for break. No other sound is like it. A minute afterwards there was another whirr, and I got into bed. I was not frightened — indeed I was not. I was very curious to know what had become of the doolies. I jumped into bed for that reason.

Next minute I heard the double click of a cannon, and my hair sat up. It is a mistake to say

that hair stands up. The skin of the head tightens, and you can feel a faint, prickly bristling all over the scalp. That is the hair sitting up.

There was a whirr and a click, and both sounds could only have been made by one thing—a billiard-ball. I argued the matter out at great length with myself; and the more I argued the less probable it seemed that one bed, one table, and two chairs—all the furniture of the room next to mine—could so exactly duplicate the sounds of a game of billiards. After another cannon, a three-cushion one to judge by the whirr, I argued no more. I had found my ghost, and would have given worlds to have escaped from that dâk-bungalow. I listened, and with each listen the game grew clearer. There was whirr on whirr and click on click. Sometimes there was a double click and a whirr and another click. Beyond any sort of doubt, people were playing billiards in the next room. And the next room was not big enough to hold a billiard-table!

Between the pauses of the wind I heard the game go forward—stroke after stroke. I tried to believe that I could not hear voices; but that attempt was a failure.

Do you know what fear is? Not ordinary fear of insult, injury, or death, but abject, quivering dread of something that you cannot see—fear that dries the inside of the mouth and half of the

throat — fear that makes you sweat on the palms of the hands, and gulp in order to keep the uvula at work? This is a fine Fear — a great cowardice, and must be felt to be appreciated. The very improbability of billiards in a dâk-bungalow proved the reality of the thing. No man — drunk or sober — could imagine a game at billiards, or invent the spitting crack of a "screw cannon."

A severe course of dâk-bungalows has this disadvantage — it breeds infinite credulity. If a man said to a confirmed dâk-bungalow-haunter: "There is a corpse in the next room, and there 's a mad girl in the next one, and the woman and man on that camel have just eloped from a place sixty miles away," the hearer would not disbelieve because he would know that nothing is too wild, grotesque, or horrible to happen in a dâk-bungalow.

This credulity, unfortunately, extends to ghosts. A rational person fresh from his own house would have turned on his side and slept. I did not. So surely as I was given up for a dry carcass by the scores of things in the bed, because the bulk of my blood was in my heart, so surely did I hear every stroke of a long game at billiards played in the echoing room behind the iron-barred door. My dominant fear was that the players might want a marker. It was an absurd fear; because creatures

who could play in the dark would be above such superfluities. I only know that that was my terror; and it was real.

After a long, long while, the game stopped, and the door banged. I slept because I was dead tired. Otherwise I should have preferred to have kept awake. Not for everything in Asia would I have dropped the door-bar and peered into the dark of the next room.

When the morning came, I considered that I had done well and wisely, and enquired for the means of departure.

"By the way, *khansamah*," I said, "what were those three doolies doing in my compound in the night?"

"There were no doolies," said the *khansamah*.

I went into the next room, and the daylight streamed through the open door. I was immensely brave. I would, at that hour, have played Black Pool with the owner of the big Black Pool down below.

"Has this place always been a dâk-bungalow?" I asked.

"No," said the *khansamah*. "Ten or twenty years ago, I have forgotten how long, it was a billiard-room."

"A what?"

"A billiard-room for the Sahibs who built the Railway. I was *khansamah* then in the big house

where all the Railway-Sahibs lived, and I used to come across with brandy-*shrab*. These three rooms were all one, and they held a big table on which the Sahibs played every evening. But the Sahibs are all dead now, and the Railway runs, you say, nearly to Kabul."

"Do you remember anything about the Sahibs?"

"It is long ago, but I remember that one Sahib, a fat man, and always angry, was playing here one night, and he said to me: 'Mangal Khan, brandy-*pani do*,' and I filled the glass, and he bent over the table to strike, and his head fell lower and lower till it hit the table, and his spectacles came off, and when we — the Sahibs and I myself — ran to lift him he was dead. I helped to carry him out. Aha, he was a strong Sahib! But he is dead, and I, old Mangal Khan, am still living, by your favour."

That was more than enough! I had my ghost — a first-hand, authenticated article. I would write to the Society for Psychical Research — I would paralyse the Empire with the news! But I would, first of all, put eighty miles of assessed crop-land between myself and that dâk-bungalow before nightfall. The Society might send their regular agent to investigate later on.

I went into my own room and prepared to pack, after noting down the facts of the case. As I smoked I heard the game begin again,— with a

miss in balk this time, for the whirr was a short one.

The door was open, and I could see into the room. *Click — click!* That was a cannon. I entered the room without fear, for there was sunlight within and a fresh breeze without. The unseen game was going on at a tremendous rate. And well it might, when a restless little rat was running to and fro inside the dingy ceiling-cloth, and a piece of loose window-sash was making fifty breaks off the window-bolt as it shook in the breeze!

Impossible to mistake the sound of billiard-balls! Impossible to mistake the whirr of a ball over the slate! But I was to be excused. Even when I shut my enlightened eyes the sound was marvellously like that of a fast game.

Entered angrily the faithful partner of my sorrows, Kadir Baksh.

"This bungalow is very bad and low-caste! No wonder the Presence was disturbed and is speckled. Three sets of doolie-bearers came to the bungalow late last night when I was sleeping outside, and said that it was their custom to rest in the rooms set apart for the English people! What honour has the *khansamah?* They tried to enter, but I told them to go. No wonder, if these *Oorias* have been here, that the Presence is sorely spotted. It is shame, and the work of a dirty man!"

Kadir Baksh did not say that he had taken from each gang two annas for rent in advance, and then, beyond my ear-shot, had beaten them with the big green umbrella whose use I could never before divine. But Kadir Baksh has no notions of morality.

There was an interview with the *khansamah*, but as he promptly lost his head, wrath gave place to pity, and pity led to a long conversation, in the course of which he put the fat Engineer-Sahib's tragic death in three separate stations — two of them fifty miles away. The third shift was to Calcutta, and there the Sahib died while driving a dog-cart.

I did not go away as soon as I intended. I stayed for the night, while the wind and the rat and the sash and the window-bolt played a ding-dong "hundred and fifty up." Then the wind ran out and the billiards stopped, and I felt that I had ruined my one genuine ghost-story.

Had I only ceased investigating at the proper time, I could have made *anything* out of it.

That was the bitterest thought of all!

THE TRACK OF A LIE

"Consequences of our acts eternal? Bosh!" said Blawkins, at the Club. "That's what the Padres say. See, now!" The smoking-room was empty, except for Blawkins and myself. "I'll tell you an idiotic little superstition I picked up the other day," said he. "The natives say that Allah allows the tiger one rupee eight annas a day for his food; and if you total up the month's cattle-bill of an average tiger, not a man-eater, you'll find that it's exactly forty-five rupees *per mensem*."

"I know that," said I. "And it happens to be true."

"Very good," said Blawkins. "Do you mean to say that anything is going to come of an idle sentence like that? I say it. You hear it. Well?" Blawkins swung out of the Club, leaving me vanquished.

But the statement rang in my head. There was something catching about the words, "Allah allows the tiger one rupee eight annas a day for his food." It was a quaint superstition, and one not generally known. Would the local paper care

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for it? It fitted a corner, empty for the moment; and one or two readers said, "What a curious idea!"

That the tiny paragraph should have wandered to Southern India was not very strange, though there was no reason why it should not have trickled to the Bombay side, instead of dropping straight as a plummet to Madras. That it should have jumped Adam's Bridge, and been copied in a Ceylon journal, was strange; but Blawkins had been transferred to the other end of the Empire, just two days before the Ceylon papers told their cinchona planters that "Allah allows the tiger one rupee eight annas a day," etc.

Three weeks passed, and from the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal came in the Burma mail. Boh Ottima was dead, and the Field Force was hard worked; Mandalay was suffering from cholera, but at the bottom of the last page the rest of the world might read that "Allah allows the tiger," etc. Blawkins was on duty in the Bolan, very sick with fever. It was not worth while to follow him with a letter.

Week by week Europe grew to be a hornet-hive, throbbing and humming angrily, as the messages pulsed through the wires. Then Singapur reported that "Allah allows the tiger," etc. Here, assuredly, was the limit of my paragraph's wandering. It might struggle into the Malayan Archi-

pelago, but beyond that scattered heap of islands it could not pass.

Germany called for more men; France answered the call with fresh battalions on her side; and the strangely scented, straw-hued journals of Shanghai and Yokohama made public to the Far East the news that "Allah allows the tiger," etc. Blawkins, now at Poona, was desperately in love with a Miss Blandyre. What were paragraphs to a passionate lover? I never sent him a line, though he bombarded me with a very auctioneer's catalogue of Miss Blandyre's charms. What would my paragraph do? It had reached the open Pacific now, and must surely drown in five thousand miles of black water. After all, it had lived long.

Yet, I had presentiments, and waited anxiously for what might come. The flying keel stayed at the Golden Gate, where the sea-lions romp and gurgle and bask: Europe shook with the tread of armed men, but — where was my paragraph? In America — for San Francisco wished to know, if "Allah allowed the tiger," etc., how much a Los Angeles hotel-keeper would be justified in charging a millionaire with *delirium tremens?* Would Eastern America accept it? The paragraph touched Salt Lake City; and thenceforward, straight as a homeward-bound bee, headed New York-wards. They took it; they cut, chipped, chopped, laughed; were ribald, pious, profane,

cynical, and frankly foolish over it; but, as though it were under a special and mysterious protection of Providence, it returned, always, to its original shape. It ran southward into New Orleans, northward to Toronto; and week after week the weather-beaten exchanges recorded its eastward progress. Boston appreciated it as something perfectly original; and at last, as a lone light dies on an extreme headland, Philadelphia sent back the news that the Emperor William was dead, and "Allah allows the tiger," etc. But Blawkins had, long ago, wedded Miss Blandyre. What was the use of writing to him? The main point of existence was, whether the paragraph could come over the Atlantic to the West Coast of England, where the country papers were lichened with the growth of local politics.

There was a long pause, and I feared that my paragraph was dead. But I did it an injustice. Over the foaming surf of the local Government Bill, through the rapids of compensation to publicans, in the teeth of the current of Mr. Gladstone's appeals to the free and enlightened electors of Wales, came my paragraph—for Birmingham found room for the announcement that "Allah allows the tiger," etc. Blawkins sent an announcement also. It cost him two rupees, was a purely local matter, and ended up with the words "of a son." But the paragraph was Imperial—nay,

Universal. I felt safe, for there was one journal in London whom nothing unusual, or alas, unclean, ever escaped. I waited with confidence the arrival of the "Yellow Wrapper." When the mails came in, the Bombay papers had already quoted and commended to the notice of the Bombay Zoölogical Society the curious statement hailing from England in the "Yellow Wrapper" that "Allah allows the tiger," etc.! The circuit was complete; and as the shears snipped out the announcement, before putting it afresh into the very cradle in which it had been born fifteen months and six days before, I felt that I had shaken hands with the whole round world. My paragraph had come home indeed!

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Tenderly as a mother shows the face of her sleeping child, I led Blawkins through the paper-cuttings, and step by step pointed out the path of the paragraph. His lower jaw dropped. "By Jove!" said he, "I was wrong—it should have been a rupee—one rupee only—not one eight."

"Then, Blawkins," said I, "you have swindled the whole wide world of the sum of eight annas," nominally one shilling.

THE WANDERING JEW

"If you go once round the world in an easterly direction, you gain one day," said the men of science to John Hay. In after years John Hay went east, west, north, and south, transacted business, made love, and begat a family, as have done many men, and the scientific information above recorded lay neglected in the deeps of his mind with a thousand other matters of equal importance.

When a rich relative died, he found himself wealthy beyond any reasonable expectation that he had entertained in his previous career, which had been a chequered and evil one. Indeed, long before the legacy came to him, there existed in the brain of John Hay a little cloud — a momentary obscuration of thought that came and went almost before he could realise that there was any solution of continuity. So do the bats flit round the eaves of a house to show that the darkness is falling. He entered upon great possessions, in money, land, and houses; but behind his delight stood a ghost that cried out that his enjoyment

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of these things should not be of long duration. It was the ghost of the rich relative, who had been permitted to return to earth to torture his nephew into the grave. Wherefore, under the spur of this constant reminder, John Hay, always preserving the air of heavy business-like stolidity that hid the shadow on his mind, turned investments, houses, and lands into sovereigns — rich, round, red English sovereigns, each one worth twenty shillings. Lands may become valueless, and houses fly heavenward on the wings of red flame, but till the Day of Judgment a sovereign will always be a sovereign — that is to say, a king of pleasures.

Possessed of his sovereigns, John Hay would fain have spent them one by one on such coarse amusements as his soul loved; but he was haunted by the instant fear of Death; for the ghost of his relative stood in the hall of his house close to the hat-rack, shouting up the stairway that life was short, that there was no hope of increase of days, and that the undertakers were already roughing out his nephew's coffin. John Hay was generally alone in the house, and even when he had company, his friends could not hear the clamorous uncle. The shadow inside his brain grew larger and blacker. His fear of death was driving John Hay mad.

Then, from the deeps of his mind, where he

had stowed away all his discarded information, rose to light the scientific fact of the Easterly journey. On the next occasion that his uncle shouted up the stairway urging him to make haste and live, a shriller voice cried, "Who goes round the world once easterly, gains one day."

His growing diffidence and distrust of mankind made John Hay unwilling to give this precious message of hope to his friends. They might take it up and analyse it. He was sure it was true, but it would pain him acutely were rough hands to examine it too closely. To him alone of all the toiling generations of mankind had the secret of immortality been vouchsafed. It would be impious — against all the designs of the Creator — to set mankind hurrying eastward. Besides, this would crowd the steamers inconveniently, and John Hay wished of all things to be alone. If he could get round the world in two months — some one of whom he had read, he could not remember the name, had covered the passage in eighty days — he would gain a clear day; and by steadily continuing to do it for thirty years, would gain one hundred and eighty days, or nearly the half of a year. It would not be much, but in course of time, as civilisation advanced, and the Euphrates Valley Railway was opened, he could improve the pace.

Armed with many sovereigns, John Hay, in

the thirty-fifth year of his age, set forth on his travels, two voices bearing him company from Dover as he sailed to Calais. Fortune favoured him. The Euphrates Valley Railway was newly opened, and he was the first man who took ticket direct from Calais to Calcutta — thirteen days in the train. Thirteen days in the train are not good for the nerves; but he covered the world and returned to Calais from America in twelve days over the two months, and started afresh with four and twenty hours of precious time to his credit. Three years passed, and John Hay religiously went round this earth seeking for more time wherein to enjoy the remainder of his sovereigns. He became known on many lines as the man who wanted to go on; when people asked him what he was and what he did, he answered —

"I'm the person who intends to live, and I am trying to do it now."

His days were divided between watching the white wake spinning behind the stern of the swiftest steamers, or the brown earth flashing past the windows of the fastest trains; and he noted in a pocket-book every minute that he had railed or screwed out of remorseless eternity.

"This is better than praying for long life," quoth John Hay as he turned his face eastward for his twentieth trip. The years had done more for him than he dared to hope. By the extension

of the Brahmaputra Valley line to meet the newly-developed China Midland, the Calais railway ticket held good *via* Karachi and Calcutta to Hongkong. The round trip could be managed in a fraction over forty-seven days, and, filled with fatal exultation, John Hay told the secret of his longevity to his only friend, the housekeeper of his rooms in London. He spoke and passed; but the woman was one of resource, and immediately took counsel with the lawyers who had first informed John Hay of his golden legacy. Very many sovereigns still remained, and another Hay longed to spend them on things more sensible than railway tickets and steamer accommodation.

The chase was long, for when a man is journeying literally for the dear life, he does not tarry upon the road. Round the world Hay swept anew, and overtook the wearied Doctor, who had been sent out to look for him, in Madras. It was there that he found the reward of his toil and the assurance of a blessed immortality. In half an hour the Doctor, watching always the parched lips, the shaking hands, and the eye that turned eternally to the east, won John Hay to rest in a little house close to the Madras surf. All that Hay need do was to hang by ropes from the roof of the room and let the round earth swing free beneath him. This was better than steamer or train, for he gained a day in a day, and was thus the equal of the

undying sun. The other Hay would pay his expenses throughout eternity.

. . . . . .

It is true that we cannot yet take tickets from Calais to Hongkong, though that will come about in fifteen years; but men say that if you wander along the southern coast of India you shall find in a neatly whitewashed little bungalow, sitting in a chair swung from the roof, over a sheet of thin steel which he knows so well destroys the attraction of the earth, an old and worn man who for ever faces the rising sun, a stop-watch in his hand, racing against eternity. He cannot drink, he does not smoke, and his living expenses amount to perhaps twenty-five rupees a month, but he is John Hay, the Immortal. Without, he hears the thunder of the wheeling world with which he is careful to explain he has no connection whatever; but if you say that it is only the noise of the surf, he will cry bitterly, for the shadow on his brain is passing away as the brain ceases to work, and he doubts sometimes whether the Doctor spoke the truth.

"Why does not the sun always remain over my head?" asks John Hay.

AT THE END OF THE PASSAGE

The sky is lead and our faces are red,
  And the gates of Hell are opened and riven,
  And the winds of Heli are loosened and driven,
And the dust flies up in the face of Heaven,
  And the clouds come down in a fiery sheet,
Heavy to raise and hard to be borne.
  And the soul of man is turned from his meat,
Turned from the trifles for which he has striven
  Sick in his body, and heavy hearted,
  And his soul flies up like the dust in the sheet,
  Breaks from his flesh and is gone and departed,
As the blasts they blow on the cholera-horn.

Himalayan.

FOUR men, each entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," sat at a table playing whist. The thermometer marked — for them — one hundred and one degrees of heat. The room was darkened till it was only just possible to distinguish the pips of the cards and the very white faces of the players. A tattered, rotten punkah of whitewashed calico was puddling the hot air and whining dolefully at each stroke. Outside lay gloom of a November day in London. There was neither sky, sun, nor horizon,— nothing but a

brown purple haze of heat. It was as though the earth were dying of apoplexy.

From time to time clouds of tawny dust rose from the ground without wind or warning, flung themseives table-cloth wise among the tops of the parched trees, and came down again. Then a whirling dust-devil would scutter across the plain for a couple of miles, break, and fall outward, though there was nothing to check its flight save a long, low line of piled railway-sleepers white with the dust, a cluster of huts made of mud, condemned rails, and canvas, and the one squat four-roomed bungalow that belonged to the assistant engineer in charge of a section of the Gaudhari State line then under construction.

The four, stripped to the thinnest of sleeping-suits, played whist crossly, with wranglings as to leads and returns. It was not the best kind of whist, but they had taken some trouble to arrive at it. Mottram of the Indian Survey had ridden thirty and railed one hundred miles from his lonely post in the desert since the night before; Lowndes of the Civil Service, on special duty in the political department, had come as far to escape for an instant the miserable intrigues of an impoverished native State whose king alternately fawned and blustered for more money from the pitiful revenues contributed by hard-wrung peasants and despairing camel-breeders; Spurstow, the doctor of the line,

had left a cholera-stricken camp of coolies to look after itself for forty-eight hours while he associated with white men once more. Hummil, the assistant engineer, was the host. He stood fast and received his friends thus every Sunday if they could come in. When one of them failed to appear, he would send a telegram to his last address, in order that he might know whether the defaulter were dead or alive. There are very many places in the East where it is not good or kind to let your acquaintances drop out of sight even for one short week.

The players were not conscious of any special regard for each other. They squabbled whenever they met; but they ardently desired to meet, as men without water desire to drink. They were lonely folk who understood the dread meaning of loneliness. They were all under thirty years of age,—which is too soon for any man to possess that knowledge.

"Pilsener?" said Spurstow, after the second rubber, mopping his forehead.

"Beer's out, I'm sorry to say, and there's hardly enough soda-water for to-night," said Hummil.

"What filthy bad management!" Spurstow snarled.

"Can't help it. I've written and wired; but the trains don't come through regularly yet. Last week the ice ran out,—as Lowndes knows."

"Glad I didn't come. I could ha' sent you some if I had known, though. Phew! it's too hot to go on playing bumblepuppy." This with a savage scowl at Lowndes, who only laughed. He was a hardened offender.

Mottram rose from the table and looked out of a chink in the shutters.

"What a sweet day!" said he.

The company yawned all together, and betook themselves to an aimless investigation of all Hummil's possessions,—guns, tattered novels, saddlery, spurs, and the like. They had fingered them a score of times before, but there was really nothing else to do.

"Got anything fresh?" said Lowndes.

"Last week's 'Gazette of India,' and a cutting from a home paper. My father sent it out. It's rather amusing."

"One of those vestrymen that call 'emselves M. P.'s again, is it?" said Spurstow, who read his newspapers when he could get them.

"Yes. Listen to this. It's to your address, Lowndes. The man was making a speech to his constituents, and he piled it on. Here's a sample: 'And I assert unhesitatingly that the Civil Service in India is the preserve — the pet preserve — of the aristocracy of England. What does the democracy — what do the masses — get from that country, which we have step by step

fraudulently annexed? I answer, nothing whatever. It is farmed with a single eye to their own interests by the scions of the aristocracy. They take good care to maintain their lavish scale of incomes, to avoid or stifle any inquiries into the nature and conduct of their administration, while they themselves force the unhappy peasant to pay with the sweat of his brow for all the luxuries in which they are lapped.'" Hummil waved the cutting above his head. "'Ear! 'Ear!" said his audience.

Then Lowndes, meditatively: "I'd give — I'd give three months' pay to have that gentleman spend one month with me and see how the free and independent native prince works things. Old Timbersides"— this was his flippant title for an honoured and decorated feudatory prince —" has been wearing my life out this week past for money. By Jove, his latest performance was to send me one of his women as a bribe!"

"Good for you! Did you accept it?" said Mottram.

"No. I rather wish I had, now. She was a pretty little person, and she yarned away to me about the horrible destitution among the king's women-folk. The darlings haven't had any new clothes for nearly a month, and the old man wants to buy a new drag from Calcutta,— solid silver railings and silver lamps, and trifles of that kind.

I've tried to make him understand that he has played the deuce with the revenues for the last twenty years and must go slow. He can't see it."

"But he has the ancestral treasure-vaults to draw on. There must be three millions at least in jewels and coin under his palace," said Hummil.

"Catch a native king disturbing the family treasure! The priests forbid it except as the last resort. Old Timbersides has added something like a quarter of a million to the deposit in his reign."

"Where the mischief does it all come from?" said Mottram.

"The country. The state of the people is enough to make you sick. I've known the tax-men wait by a milch-camel till the foal was born, and then hurry off the mother for arrears. And what can I do? I can't get the court clerks to give me any accounts; I can't raise anything more than a fat smile from the commander-in-chief when I find out the troops are three months in arrears; and old Timbersides begins to weep when I speak to him. He has taken to the King's Peg heavily,—liqueur brandy for whiskey, and Heidsieck for soda-water."

"That's what the Rao of Jubela took to. Even a native can't last long at that," said Spurstow. "He'll go out."

"And a good thing, too. Then I suppose we'll have a council of regency, and a tutor for the young prince, and hand him back his kingdom with ten years' accumulations."

"Whereupon that young prince, having been taught all the vices of the English, will play ducks and drakes with the money, and undo ten years' work in eighteen months. I've seen that business before," said Spurstow. "I should tackle the king with a light hand, if I were you, Lowndes. They'll hate you quite enough under any circumstances."

"That's all very well. The man who looks on can talk about the light hand; but you can't clean a pig-stye with a pen dipped in rose-water. I know my risks; but nothing has happened yet. My servant's an old Pathan, and he cooks for me. They are hardly likely to bribe him, and I don't accept food from my true friends, as they call themselves. Oh, but it's weary work! I'd sooner be with you, Spurstow. There's shooting near your camp."

"Would you? I don't think it. About fifteen deaths a day don't incite a man to shoot anything but himself. And the worst of it is that the poor devils look at you as though you ought to save them. Lord knows, I've tried everything. My last attempt was empirical, but it pulled an old man through. He was brought to me apparently past hope, and I gave him gin and Wor-

cester sauce with cayenne. It cured him; but I don't recommend it."

"How do the cases run generally?" said Hummil.

"Very simply indeed. Chlorodyne, opium pill, chlorodyne, collapse, nitre, bricks to the feet, and then — the burning-ghat. The last seems to be the only thing that stops the trouble. It's black cholera, you know. Poor devils! But, I will say, little Bunsee Lal, my apothecary, works like a demon. I've recommended him for promotion if he comes through it all alive."

"And what are your chances, old man?" said Mottram.

"Don't know; don't care much; but I've sent the letter in. What are you doing with yourself generally?"

"Sitting under a table in the tent and spitting on the sextant to keep it cool," said the man of the survey. "Washing my eyes to avoid ophthalmia, which I shall certainly get, and trying to make a sub-surveyor understand that an error of five degrees in an angle isn't quite so small as it looks. I'm altogether alone, y'know, and shall be till the end of the hot weather."

"Hummil's the lucky man," said Lowndes, flinging himself into a long chair. "He has an actual roof — torn as to the ceiling-cloth, but still a roof — over his head. He sees one train daily.

He can get beer and soda-water and ice 'em when God is good. He has books, pictures," — they were torn from the "Graphic,"— "and the society of the excellent sub-contractor Jevins, besides the pleasure of receiving us weekly."

Hummil smiled grimly. "Yes, I'm the lucky man, I suppose. Jevins is luckier."

"How? Not ——"

"Yes. Went out. Last Monday."

"By his own hand?" said Spurstow quickly, hinting the suspicion that was in everybody's mind. There was no cholera near Hummil's section. Even fever gives a man at least a week's grace, and sudden death generally implied self-slaughter.

"I judge no man this weather," said Hummil. "He had a touch of the sun, I fancy; for last week, after you fellows had left, he came into the verandah and told me that he was going home to see his wife, in Market Street, Liverpool, that evening.

"I got the apothecary in to look at him, and we tried to make him lie down. After an hour or two he rubbed his eyes and said he believed he had had a fit,—hoped he hadn't said anything rude. Jevins had a great idea of bettering himself socially. He was very like Chucks in his language."

"Well?"

"Then he went to his own bungalow and began cleaning a rifle. He told the servant that he was going to shoot buck in the morning. Naturally he fumbled with the trigger, and shot himself through the head—accidentally. The apothecary sent in a report to my chief, and Jevins is buried somewhere out there. I'd have wired to you, Spurstow, if you could have done anything."

"You're a queer chap," said Mottram. "If you'd killed the man yourself you couldn't have been more quiet about the business."

"Good Lord! what does it matter?" said Hummil calmly. "I've got to do a lot of his overseeing work in addition to my own. I'm the only person that suffers. Jevins is out of it—by pure accident, of course, but out of it. The apothecary was going to write a long screed on suicide. Trust a babu to drivel when he gets the chance."

"Why didn't you let it go in as suicide?" said Lowndes.

"No direct proof. A man hasn't many privileges in this country, but he might at least be allowed to mishandle his own rifle. Besides, some day I may need a man to smother up an accident to myself. Live and let live. Die and let die."

"You take a pill," said Spurstow, who had been watching Hummil's white face narrowly. "Take a pill, and don't be an ass. That sort of talk is

skittles. Anyhow, suicide is shirking your work. If I were Job ten times over, I should be so interested in what was going to happen next that I'd stay on and watch."

"Ah! I've lost that curiosity," said Hummil.

"Liver out of order?" said Lowndes feelingly.

"No. Can't sleep. That's worse."

"By Jove, it is!" said Mottram. "I'm that way every now and then, and the fit has to wear itself out. What do you take for it?"

"Nothing. What's the use? I haven't had ten minutes' sleep since Friday morning."

"Poor chap! Spurstow, you ought to attend to this," said Mottram. "Now you mention it, your eyes are rather gummy and swollen."

Spurstow, still watching Hummil, laughed lightly. "I'll patch him up, later on. Is it too hot, do you think, to go for a ride?"

"Where to?" said Lowndes wearily. "We shall have to go away at eight, and there'll be riding enough for us then. I hate a horse when I have to use him as a necessity. Oh, heavens! what is there to do?"

"Begin whist again, at chick points ["a chick" is supposed to be eight shillings] and a gold mohur on the rub," said Spurstow promptly.

"Poker. A month's pay all round for the pool, — no limit, — and fifty-rupee raises. Somebody would be broken before we got up," said Lowndes.

"Can't say that it would give me any pleasure to break any man in this company," said Mottram. "There isn't enough excitement in it, and it's foolish." He crossed over to the worn and battered little camp-piano,—wreckage of a married household that had once held the bungalow,—and opened the case.

"It's used up long ago," said Hummil. "The servants have picked it to pieces."

The piano was indeed hopelessly out of order, but Mottram managed to bring the rebellious notes into a sort of agreement, and there rose from the ragged keyboard something that might once have been the ghost of a popular music-hall song. The men in the long chairs turned with evident interest as Mottram banged the more lustily.

"That's good!" said Lowndes. "By Jove! the last time I heard that song was in '79, or thereabouts, just before I came out."

"Ah!" said Spurstow with pride, "I was home in '80." And he mentioned a song of the streets popular at that date.

Mottram executed it roughly. Lowndes criticised and volunteered emendations. Mottram dashed into another ditty, not of the music-hall character, and made as if to rise.

"Sit down," said Hummil. "I didn't know that you had any music in your composition. Go on playing until you can't think of anything more.

I'll have that piano tuned up before you come again. Play something festive."

Very simple indeed were the tunes to which Mottram's art and the limitations of the piano could give effect, but the men listened with pleasure, and in the pauses talked all together of what they had seen or heard when they were last at home. A dense dust-storm sprung up outside, and swept roaring over the house, enveloping it in the choking darkness of midnight, but Mottram continued unheeding, and the crazy tinkle reached the ears of the listeners above the flapping of the tattered ceiling-cloth.

In the silence after the storm he glided from the more directly personal songs of Scotland, half humming them as he played, into the Evening Hymn.

"Sunday," said he, nodding his head.

"Go on. Don't apologise for it," said Spurstow.

Hummil laughed long and riotously. "Play it, by all means. You're full of surprises to-day. I didn't know you had such a gift of finished sarcasm. How does that thing go?"

Mottram took up the tune.

"Too slow by half. You miss the note of gratitude," said Hummil. "It ought to go to the 'Grasshopper's Polka,'—this way." And he chanted, *prestissimo*,—

"Glory to thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light.

That shows we really feel our blessings. How does it go on?—

> "If in the night I sleepless lie,
> My soul with sacred thoughts supply;
> May no ill dreams disturb my rest,—

Quicker, Mottram!—

> "Or powers of darkness me molest!"

"Bah! what an old hypocrite you are!"

"Don't be an ass," said Lowndes. "You are at full liberty to make fun of anything else you like, but leave that hymn alone. It's associated in my mind with the most sacred recollections——"

"Summer evenings in the country,—stained-glass window,—light going out, and you and she jamming your heads together over one hymn-book," said Mottram.

"Yes, and a fat old cockchafer hitting you in the eye when you walked home. Smell of hay, and a moon as big as a bandbox sitting on the top of a haycock; bats,—roses,—milk and midges," said Lowndes.

"Also mothers. I can just recollect my mother singing me to sleep with that when I was a little chap," said Spurstow.

The darkness had fallen on the room. They could hear Hummil squirming in his chair.

"Consequently," said he testily, "you sing it

when you are seven fathom deep in Hell! It's an insult to the intelligence of the Deity to pretend we're anything but tortured rebels."

"Take *two* pills," said Spurstow; "that's tortured liver."

"The usually placid Hummil is in a vile bad temper. I'm sorry for his coolies to-morrow," said Lowndes, as the servants brought in the lights and prepared the table for dinner.

As they were settling into their places about the miserable goat-chops and the smoked tapioca pudding, Spurstow took occasion to whisper to Mottram, "Well done, David!"

"Look after Saul, then," was the reply.

"What are you two whispering about?" said Hummil suspiciously.

"Only saying that you are a damned poor host. This fowl can't be cut," returned Spurstow with a sweet smile. "Call this a dinner?"

"I can't help it. You don't expect a banquet, do you?"

Throughout that meal Hummil contrived laboriously to insult directly and pointedly all his guests in succession, and at each insult Spurstow kicked the aggrieved persons under the table; but he dared not exchange a glance of intelligence with either of them. Hummil's face was white and pinched, while his eyes were unnaturally large. No man dreamed for a moment of resenting his

savage personalities, but as soon as the meal was over they made haste to get away.

"Don't go. You're just getting amusing, you fellows. I hope I haven't said anything that annoyed you. You're such touchy devils." Then, changing the note into one of almost abject entreaty, Hummil added, "I say, you surely aren't going?"

"In the language of the blessed Jorrocks, where I dines I sleeps," said Spurstow. "I want to have a look at your coolies to-morrow, if you don't mind. You can give me a place to lie down in, I suppose?"

The others pleaded the urgency of their several duties next day, and, saddling up, departed together, Hummil begging them to come next Sunday. As they jogged off, Lowndes unbosomed himself to Mottram—

". . . And I never felt so like kicking a man at his own table in my life. He said I cheated at whist, and reminded me I was in debt! 'Told you you were as good as a liar to your face! You aren't half indignant enough over it."

"Not I," said Mottram. "Poor devil! Did you ever know old Hummy behave like that before, or within a hundred miles of it?"

"That's no excuse. Spurstow was hacking my shin all the time, so I kept a hand on myself. Else I should have——"

"No, you wouldn't. You'd have done as Hummy did about Jevins; judge no man this weather. By Jove! the buckle of my bridle is hot in my hand! Trot out a bit, and 'ware rat-holes."

Ten minutes' trotting jerked out of Lowndes one very sage remark when he pulled up, sweating from every pore —

"'Good thing Spurstow's with him to-night."

"Ye-es. Good man, Spurstow. Our roads turn here. See you again next Sunday, if the sun doesn't bowl me over."

"S'pose so, unless old Timbersides' finance minister manages to dress some of my food. Good-night, and — God bless you!"

"What's wrong now?"

"Oh, nothing." Lowndes gathered up his whip, and, as he flicked Mottram's mare on the flank, added, "You're not a bad little chap,— that's all." And the mare bolted half a mile across the sand, on the word.

In the assistant engineer's bungalow Spurstow and Hummil smoked the pipe of silence together, each narrowly watching the other. The capacity of a bachelor's establishment is as elastic as its arrangements are simple. A servant cleared away the dining-room table, brought in a couple of rude native bedsteads made of tape strung on a light wood frame, flung a square of cool Calcutta mat-

ting over each, set them side by side, pinned two towels to the punkah so that their fringes should just sweep clear of the sleeper's nose and mouth, and announced that the couches were ready.

The men flung themselves down, ordering the punkah-coolies by all the powers of Hell to pull. Every door and window was shut, for the outside air was that of an oven. The atmosphere within was only 104°, as the thermometer bore witness, and heavy with the foul smell of badly-trimmed kerosene lamps; and this stench, combined with that of native tobacco, baked brick, and dried earth, sends the heart of many a strong man down to his boots, for it is the smell of the Great Indian Empire when she turns herself for six months into a house of torment. Spurstow packed his pillows craftily so that he reclined rather than lay, his head at a safe elevation above his feet. It is not good to sleep on a low pillow in the hot weather if you happen to be of thick-necked build, for you may pass with lively snores and gugglings from natural sleep into the deep slumber of heat-apoplexy.

"Pack your pillows," said the doctor sharply, as he saw Hummil preparing to lie down at full length.

The night-light was trimmed; the shadow of the punkah wavered across the room, and the "*flick*" of the punkah-towel and the soft whine

of the rope through the wall-hole followed it. Then the punkah flagged, almost ceased. The sweat poured from Spurstow's brow. Should he go out and harangue the coolie? It started forward again with a savage jerk, and a pin came out of the towels. When this was replaced, a tomtom in the coolie-lines began to beat with the steady throb of a swollen artery inside some brain-fevered skull. Spurstow turned on his side and swore gently. There was no movement on Hummil's part. The man had composed himself as rigidly as a corpse, his hands clinched at his sides. The respiration was too hurried for any suspicion of sleep. Spurstow looked at the set face. The jaws were clinched, and there was a pucker round the quivering eyelids.

"He's holding himself as tightly as ever he can," thought Spurstow. "What in the world is the matter with him? — Hummil!"

"Yes," in a thick, constrained voice.

"Can't you get to sleep?"

"No."

"'Head hot? 'Throat feeling bulgy? or how?"

"Neither, thanks. I don't sleep much, you know."

"'Feel pretty bad?"

"Pretty bad, thanks. There is a tomtom outside, isn't there? I thought it was my head at first. . . . Oh, Spurstow, for pity's sake give me

something that will put me asleep,— sound asleep, — if it's only for six hours!" He sprang up, trembling from head to foot. "I haven't been able to sleep naturally for days, and I can't stand it! — I can't stand it!"

"Poor old chap!"

"That's no use. Give me something to make me sleep. I tell you I'm nearly mad. I don't know what I say half my time. For three weeks I've had to think and spell out every word that has come through my lips before I dared say it. Isn't that enough to drive a man mad? I can't see things correctly now, and I've lost my sense of touch. My skin aches — my skin aches! Make me sleep. Oh, Spurstow, for the love of God make me sleep sound. It isn't enough merely to let me dream. Let me sleep!"

"All right, old man, all right. Go slow; you aren't half as bad as you think."

The flood-gates of reserve once broken, Hummil was clinging to him like a frightened child. "You're pinching my arm to pieces."

"I'll break your neck if you don't do something for me. No, I didn't mean that. Don't be angry, old fellow." He wiped the sweat off himself as he fought to regain composure. "I'm a bit restless and off my oats, and perhaps you could recommend some sort of sleeping-mixture,— bromide of potassium."

"Bromide of skittles! Why didn't you tell me this before? Let go of my arm, and I'll see if there's anything in my cigarette-case to suit your complaint." Spurstow hunted among his day-clothes, turned up the lamp, opened a little silver cigarette-case, and advanced on the expectant Hummil with the daintiest of fairy squirts.

"The last appeal of civilization," said he, "and a thing I hate to use. Hold out your arm. Well, your sleeplessness hasn't ruined your muscle; and what a thick hide it is! Might as well inject a buffalo subcutaneously. Now in a few minutes the morphia will begin working. Lie down and wait."

A smile of unalloyed and idiotic delight began to creep over Hummil's face. "I think," he whispered,—"I think I'm going off now. Gad! it's positively heavenly! Spurstow, you must give me that case to keep; you —" The voice ceased as the head fell back.

"Not for a good deal," said Spurstow to the unconscious form. "And now, my friend, sleeplessness of your kind being very apt to relax the moral fibre in little matters of life and death, I'll just take the liberty of spiking your guns."

He paddled into Hummil's saddle-room in his bare feet, and uncased a twelve-bore rifle, an express, and a revolver. Of the first he unscrewed the nipples and hid them in the bottom of a sad-

dlery-case; of the second he abstracted the lever, kicking it behind a big wardrobe. The third he merely opened, and knocked the doll-head bolt of the grip up with the heel of a riding-boot.

"That's settled," he said, as he shook the sweat off his hands. "These little precautions will at least give you time to turn. You have too much sympathy with gun-room accidents."

And as he rose from his knees, the thick, muffled voice of Hummil cried in the doorway, "You fool!"

Such tones they use who speak in the lucid intervals of delirium to their friends a little before they die.

Spurstow started, dropping the pistol. Hummil stood in the doorway, rocking with helpless laughter.

"That was awf'ly good of you, I'm sure," he said, very slowly, feeling for his words. "I don't intend to go out by my own hand at present. I say, Spurstow, that stuff won't work. What shall I do? What shall I do?" And panic terror stood in his eyes.

"Lie down and give it a chance. Lie down at once."

"I daren't. It will only take me half-way again, and I sha'n't be able to get away this time. Do you know it was all I could do to come out just now? Generally I am as quick as lightning;

but you had clogged my feet. I was nearly caught."

"Oh, yes, I understand. Go and lie down."

"No, it isn't delirium; but it was an awfully mean trick to play on me. Do you know I might have died?"

As a sponge rubs a slate clean, so some power unknown to Spurstow had wiped out of Hummil's face all that stamped it for the face of a man, and he stood at the doorway in the expression of his lost innocence. He had slept back into terrified childhood.

"Is he going to die on the spot?" thought Spurstow. Then, aloud, "All right, my son. Come back to bed, and tell me all about it. You couldn't sleep; but what was all the rest of the nonsense?"

"A place — a place down there," said Hummil, with simple sincerity. The drug was acting on him by waves, and he was flung from the fear of a strong man to the fright of a child as his nerves gathered sense or were dulled.

"Good God! I've been afraid of it for months past, Spurstow. It has made every night hell to me; and yet I'm not conscious of having done anything wrong."

"Be still, and I'll give you another dose. We'll stop your nightmares, you unutterable idiot!"

"Yes, but you must give me so much that I

can't get away. You must make me quite sleepy, — not just a little sleepy. It's so hard to run then."

"I know it; I know it. I've felt it myself. The symptoms are exactly as you describe."

"Oh, don't laugh at me, confound you! Before this awful sleeplessness came to me I've tried to rest on my elbow, and put a spur in the bed to sting me when I fell back. Look!"

"By Jove! the man has been rowelled like a horse! Ridden by the nightmare with a vengeance! And we all thought him sensible enough. Heaven send us understanding! You like to talk, don't you?"

"Yes, sometimes. Not when I'm frightened. *Then* I want to run. Don't you?"

"Always. Before I give you your second dose, try to tell me exactly what your trouble is."

Hummil spoke in broken whispers for nearly ten minutes, whilst Spurstow looked into the pupils of his eyes and passed his hand before them once or twice.

At the end of the narrative the silver cigarette-case was produced, and the last words that Hummil said as he fell back for the second time were, "Put me quite to sleep; for if I'm caught I die,— I die!"

"Yes, yes; we all do that sooner or later,— thank Heaven, who has set a term to our miseries,"

said Spurstow, settling the cushions under the head. "It occurs to me that unless I drink something I shall go out before my time. I've stopped sweating, and — I wear a seventeen-inch collar." He brewed himself scalding-hot tea, which is an excellent remedy against heat-apoplexy if you take three or four cups of it in time. Then he watched the sleeper.

"A blind face that cries and can't wipe its eyes, a blind face that chases him down corridors! H'm! Decidedly, Hummil ought to go on leave as soon as possible; and, sane or otherwise, he undoubtedly did rowel himself most cruelly. Well, Heaven send us understanding!"

At mid-day Hummil rose, with an evil taste in his mouth, but an unclouded eye and a joyful heart.

"I was pretty bad last night, wasn't I?" said he.

"I have seen healthier men. You must have had a touch of the sun. Look here: if I write you a swingeing medical certificate, will you apply for leave on the spot?"

"No."

"Why not? You want it."

"Yes, but I can hold on till the weather's a little cooler."

"Why should you, if you can get relieved on the spot?"

"Burkett is the only man who could be sent; and he's a born fool."

"Oh, never mind about the line. You aren't so important as all that. Wire for leave, if necessary."

Hummil looked very uncomfortable.

"I can hold on till the Rains," he said evasively.

"You can't. Wire to headquarters for Burkett."

"I won't. If you want to know why, particularly, Burkett is married, and his wife's just had a kid, and she's up at Simla, in the cool, and Burkett has a very nice billet that takes him into Simla from Saturday to Monday. That little woman isn't at all well. If Burkett was transferred she'd try to follow him. If she left the baby behind she'd fret herself to death. If she came,—and Burkett's one of those selfish little beasts who are always talking about a wife's place being with her husband,—she'd die. It's murder to bring a woman here just now. Burkett hasn't the physique of a rat. If he came here he'd go out; and I know she hasn't any money, and I'm pretty sure she'd go out too. I'm salted in a sort of way, and I'm not married. Wait till the Rains, and then Burkett can get thin down here. It'll do him heaps of good."

"Do you mean to say that you intend to face —what you have faced, till the Rains break?"

"Oh, it won't be so bad, now you've shown me a way out of it. I can always wire to you. Be-

sides, now I've once got into the way of sleeping, it'll be all right. Anyhow, I sha'n't put in for leave. That's the long and the short of it."

"My great Scott! I thought all that sort of thing was dead and done with."

"Bosh! You'd do the same yourself. I feel a new man, thanks to that cigarette-case. You're going over to camp now, aren't you?"

"Yes; but I'll try to look you up every other day, if I can."

"I'm not bad enough for that. I don't want you to bother. Give the coolies gin and ketchup."

"Then you feel all right?"

"Fit to fight for my life, but not to stand out in the sun talking to you. Go along, old man, and bless you!"

Hummil turned on his heel to face the echoing desolation of his bungalow, and the first thing he saw standing in the verandah was the figure of himself. He had met a similar apparition once before, when he was suffering from overwork and the strain of the hot weather.

"This is bad,—already," he said, rubbing his eyes. "If the thing slides away from me all in one piece, like a ghost, I shall know it is only my eyes and stomach that are out of order. If it walks — my head is going."

He approached the figure, which naturally kept at an unvarying distance from him, as is the use of

all spectres that are born of overwork. It slid through the house and dissolved into swimming specks within the eyeball as soon as it reached the burning light of the garden. Hummil went about his business till even. When he came in to dinner he found himself sitting at the table. The vision rose and walked out hastily. Except that it cast no shadow it was in all respects real.

No living man knows what that week held for Hummil. An increase of the epidemic kept Spurstow in camp among the coolies, and all he could do was to telegraph to Mottram, bidding him go to the bungalow and sleep there. But Mottram was forty miles away from the nearest telegraph, and knew nothing of anything save the needs of the survey till he met, early on Sunday morning, Lowndes and Spurstow heading towards Hummil's for the weekly gathering.

"Hope the poor chap's in a better temper," said the former, swinging himself off his horse at the door. "I suppose he isn't up yet."

"I'll just have a look at him," said the doctor. "If he's asleep there's no need to wake him."

And an instant later, by the tone of Spurstow's voice calling upon them to enter, the men knew what had happened. There was no need to wake him.

The punkah was still being pulled over the

bed, but Hummil had departed this life at least three hours.

The body lay on its back, hands clinched by the side, as Spurstow had seen it lying seven nights previously. In the staring eyes was written terror beyond the expression of any pen.

Mottram, who had entered behind Lowndes, bent over the dead and touched the forehead lightly with his lips. "Oh, you lucky, lucky devil!" he whispered.

But Lowndes had seen the eyes, and withdrew shuddering to the other side of the room.

"Poor chap! poor old chap! And the last time I met him I was angry. Spurstow, we should have watched him. Has he ——?"

Deftly Spurstow continued his investigations, ending by a search round the room.

"No, he hasn't," he snapped. "There's no trace of anything. Call the servants."

They came, eight or ten of them, whispering and peering over each other's shoulders.

"When did your Sahib go to bed?" said Spurstow.

"At eleven or ten, we think," said Hummil's personal servant.

"He was well then? But how should you know?"

"He was not ill, as far as our comprehension extended. But he had slept very little for three

nights. This I know, because I saw him walking much, and specially in the heart of the night."

As Spurstow was arranging the sheet, a big straight-necked hunting-spur tumbled on the ground. The doctor groaned. The personal servant peeped at the body.

"What do you think, Chuma?" said Spurstow, catching the look on the dark face.

"Heaven-born, in my poor opinion, this that was my master has descended into the Dark Places, and there has been caught because he was not able to escape with sufficient speed. We have the spur for evidence that he fought with Fear. Thus have I seen men of my race do with thorns when a spell was laid upon them to overtake them in their sleeping hours and they dared not sleep."

"Chuma, you're a mud-head. Go out and prepare seals to be set on the Sahib's property."

"God has made the Heaven-born. God has made me. Who are we, to inquire into the dispensations of God? I will bid the other servants hold aloof while you are reckoning the tale of the Sahib's property. They are all thieves, and would steal."

"As far as I can make out, he died from — oh, anything; stoppage of the heart's action, heat-apoplexy, or some other visitation," said Spurstow

to his companions. "We must make an inventory of his effects, and so on."

"He was scared to death," insisted Lowndes. "Look at those eyes! For pity's sake don't let him be buried with them open!"

"Whatever it was, he's clear of all the trouble now," said Mottram softly.

Spurstow was peering into the open eyes.

"Come here," said he. "Can you see anything there?"

"I can't face it!" whimpered Lowndes. "Cover up the face! Is there any fear on earth that can turn a man into that likeness? It's ghastly. Oh, Spurstow, cover it up!"

"No fear — on earth," said Spurstow. Mottram leaned over his shoulder and looked intently.

"I see nothing except some gray blurs in the pupil. There can be nothing there, you know."

"Even so. Well, let's think. It'll take half a day to knock up any sort of coffin; and he must have died at midnight. Lowndes, old man, go out and tell the coolies to break ground next to Jevins's grave. Mottram, go round the house with Chuma and see that the seals are put on things. Send a couple of men to me here, and I'll arrange."

The strong-armed servants when they returned to their own kind told a strange story of the doctor

Sahib vainly trying to call their master back to life by magic arts,—to wit, the holding of a little green box that clicked to each of the dead man's eyes,—and of a bewildered muttering on the part of the doctor Sahib, who took the little green box away with him.

The resonant hammering of a coffin-lid is no pleasant thing to hear, but those who have experience maintain that much more terrible is the soft swish of the bed-linen, the reeving and unreeving of the bed-tapes, when he who has fallen by the roadside is apparelled for burial, sinking gradually as the tapes are tied over, till the swaddled shape touches the floor and there is no protest against the indignity of hasty disposal.

At the last moment Lowndes was seized with scruples of conscience. "Ought you to read the service,—from beginning to end?" said he to Spurstow.

"I intend to. You're my senior as a civilian. You can take it if you like."

"I didn't mean that for a moment. I only thought if we could get a chaplain from somewhere,—I'm willing to ride anywhere,—and give poor Hummil a better chance. That's all."

"Bosh!" said Spurstow, as he framed his lips to the tremendous words that stand at the head of the burial service.

After breakfast they smoked a pipe in silence to the memory of the dead. Then Spurstow said absently —

"'Tisn't in medical science."

"What?"

"Things in a dead man's eye."

"For goodness' sake leave that horror alone!" said Lowndes. "I've seen a native die of pure fright when a tiger chivied him. I know what killed Hummil."

"The deuce you do! I'm going to try to see." And the doctor retreated into the bath-room with a Kodak camera. After a few minutes there was the sound of something being hammered to pieces, and he emerged, very white indeed.

"Have you got a picture?" said Mottram. "What does the thing look like?"

"It was impossible, of course. You needn't look, Mottram. I've torn up the films. There was nothing there. It was impossible."

"That," said Lowndes, very distinctly, watching the shaking hand striving to relight the pipe, "is a damned lie."

Mottram laughed uneasily. "Spurstow's right," he said. "We're all in such a state now that we'd believe anything. For pity's sake let's try to be rational."

There was no further speech for a long time. The hot wind whistled without, and the dry trees

sobbed. Presently the daily train, winking brass, burnished steel, and spouting steam pulled up panting in the intense glare. "We'd better go on on that," said Spurstow. "Go back to work. I've written my certificate. We can't do any more good here, and work'll keep our wits together. Come on."

No one moved. It is not pleasant to face railway journeys at mid-day in June. Spurstow gathered up his hat and whip, and, turning in the doorway, said—

> "There may be Heaven,— there must be Hell.
> Meantime, there is our life here. We-ell?"

Neither Mottram nor Lowndes had any answer to the question.

THE CHILDREN OF THE ZODIAC

Though thou love her as thyself,
As a self of purer clay,
Though her parting dim the day,
Stealing grace from all alive,
Heartily know
When half Gods go
The Gods arrive. *Emerson.*

THOUSANDS of years ago, when men were greater than they are to-day, the Children of the Zodiac lived in the world. There were six Children of the Zodiac — the Ram, the Bull, the Lion, the Twins, and the Girl; and they were afraid of the Six Houses which belonged to the Scorpion, the Balance, the Crab, the Fishes, the Goat, and the Waterman. Even when they first stepped down upon the earth and knew that they were immortal Gods, they carried this fear with them; and the fear grew as they became better acquainted with mankind and heard stories of the Six Houses. Men treated the Children as Gods and came to them with prayers and long stories of wrong, while

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the Children of the Zodiac listened and could not understand.

A mother would fling herself before the feet of the Twins, or the Bull, crying: "My husband was at work in the fields and the Archer shot him and he died; and my son will also be killed by the Archer. Help me!" The Bull would lower his huge head and answer: "What is that to me?" Or the Twins would smile and continue their play, for they could not understand why the water ran out of people's eyes. At other times a man and a woman would come to Leo or the Girl crying: "We two are newly married and we are very happy. Take these flowers." As they threw the flowers they would make mysterious sounds to show that they were happy, and Leo and the Girl wondered even more than the Twins why people shouted "Ha! ha! ha!" for no cause.

This continued for thousands of years by human reckoning, till, on a day, Leo met the Girl walking across the hills and saw that she had changed entirely since he had last seen her. The Girl, looking at Leo, saw that he too had changed altogether. Then they decided that it would be well never to separate again, in case even more startling changes should occur when the one was not at hand to help the other. Leo kissed the Girl and all Earth felt that kiss, and the Girl sat down on a hill and the water ran out of her eyes; and

this had never happened before in the memory of the Children of the Zodiac.

As they sat together a man and a woman came by, and the man said to the woman:

"What is the use of wasting flowers on those dull Gods. They will never understand, darling."

The Girl jumped up and put her arms round the woman, crying, "I understand. Give me the flowers and I will give you a kiss."

Leo said beneath his breath to the man: "What was the new name that I heard you give to your woman just now?"

The man answered, "Darling, of course."

"Why, of course," said Leo; "and if of course, what does it mean?"

"It means 'very dear,' and you have only to look at your wife to see why."

"I see," said Leo; "you are quite right;" and when the man and the woman had gone on he called the Girl "darling wife"; and the Girl wept again from sheer happiness.

"I think," she said at last, wiping her eyes, "I think that we two have neglected men and women too much. What did you do with the sacrifices they made to you, Leo?"

"I let them burn," said Leo. "I could not eat them. What did you do with the flowers?"

"I let them wither. I could not wear them, I

had so many of my own," said the Girl, "and now I am sorry."

"There is nothing to grieve for," said Leo; "we belong to each other."

As they were talking the years of men's life slipped by unnoticed, and presently the man and the woman came back, both white-headed, the man carrying the woman.

"We have come to the end of things," said the man quietly. "This that was my wife —"

"As I am Leo's wife," said the Girl quickly, her eyes staring.

"— was my wife, has been killed by one of your Houses." The man set down his burden, and laughed.

"Which House?" said Leo angrily, for he hated all the Houses equally.

"You are Gods, you should know," said the man. "We have lived together and loved one another, and I have left a good farm for my son: what have I to complain of except that I still live?"

As he was bending over his wife's body there came a whistling through the air, and he started and tried to run away, crying, "It is the arrow of the Archer. Let me live a little longer — only a little longer!" The arrow struck him, and he died. Leo looked at the Girl and she looked at him, and both were puzzled.

"He wished to die," said Leo. "He said that

he wished to die, and when Death came he tried to run away. He is a coward."

"No, he is not," said the Girl; "I think I feel what he felt. Leo, we must learn more about this for their sakes."

"For *their* sakes," said Leo, very loudly.

"Because *we* are never going to die," said the Girl and Leo together, still more loudly.

"Now sit you still here, darling wife," said Leo, "while I go to the Houses whom we hate, and learn how to make these men and women live as we do."

"And love as we do?" said the Girl.

"I do not think they need to be taught that," said Leo, and he strode away very angry, with his lion-skin swinging from his shoulder, till he came to the House where the Scorpion lives in the darkness, brandishing his tail over his back.

"Why do you trouble the children of men?" said Leo, with his heart between his teeth.

"Are you so sure that I trouble the children of men alone?" said the Scorpion. "Speak to your brother the Bull, and see what he says."

"I come on behalf of the children of men," said Leo. "I have learned to love as they do, and I wish them to live as I — as we — do."

"Your wish was granted long ago. Speak to the Bull. He is under my special care," said the Scorpion.

Leo dropped back to the earth again, and saw the great star Aldebaran, that is set in the forehead of the Bull, blazing very near to the earth. When he came up to it he saw that his brother the Bull, yoked to a countryman's plough, was toiling through a wet rice-field with his head bent down, and the sweat streaming from his flanks. The countryman was urging him forward with a goad.

"Gore that insolent to death," cried Leo, "and for the sake of our family honour come out of the mire."

"I cannot," said the Bull; "the Scorpion has told me that some day, of which I cannot be sure, he will sting me where my neck is set on my shoulders, and that I shall die bellowing."

"What has that to do with this disgraceful exhibition?" said Leo, standing on the dyke that bounded the wet field.

"Everything. This man could not plough without my help. He thinks that I am a stray bullock."

"But he is a mud-crusted cottar with matted hair," insisted Leo. "We are not meant for his use."

"You may not be; I am. I cannot tell when the Scorpion may choose to sting me to death — perhaps before I have turned this furrow." The Bull flung his bulk into the yoke, and the plough

tore through the wet ground behind him, and the countryman goaded him till his flanks were red.

"Do you like this?" Leo called down the dripping furrows.

"No," said the Bull over his shoulder as he lifted his hind legs from the clinging mud and cleared his nostrils.

Leo left him scornfully and passed to another country, where he found his brother the Ram in the centre of a crowd of country people who were hanging wreaths round his neck and feeding him on freshly-plucked green corn.

"This is terrible," said Leo. "Break up that crowd and come away, my brother. Their hands are spoiling your fleece."

"I cannot," said the Ram. "The Archer told me that on some day of which I had no knowledge he would send a dart through me, and that I should die in very great pain."

"What has that to do with this?" said Leo, but he did not speak as confidently as before.

"Everything in the world," said the Ram. "These people never saw a perfect sheep before. They think that I am a stray, and they will carry me from place to place as a model to all their flocks."

"But they are greasy shepherds; we are not intended to amuse them," said Leo.

"You may not be; I am," said the Ram. "I

cannot tell when the Archer may choose to send his arrow at me—perhaps before the people a mile down the road have seen me." The Ram lowered his head that a yokel newly arrived might throw a wreath of wild garlic-leaves over it, and waited patiently while the farmers tugged his fleece.

"Do you like this?" cried Leo over the shoulders of the crowd.

"No," said the Ram, as the dust of the trampling feet made him sneeze, and he snuffed at the fodder piled before him.

Leo turned back, intending to retrace his steps to the Houses; but as he was passing down a street he saw two small children, very dusty, rolling outside a cottage door, and playing with a cat. They were the Twins.

"What are you doing here?" said Leo, indignant.

"Playing," said the Twins calmly.

"Cannot you play on the banks of the Milky Way?" said Leo.

"We did," said they, "till the Fishes swam down and told us that some day they would come for us and not hurt us at all and carry us away. So now we are playing at being babies down here. The people like it."

"Do you like it?" said Leo.

"No," said the Twins, "but there are no cats

in the Milky Way," and they pulled the cat's tail thoughtfully. A woman came out of the doorway and stood behind them, and Leo saw in her face a look that he had sometimes seen in the Girl's.

"She thinks that we are foundlings," said the Twins, and they trotted indoors to the evening meal.

Then Leo hurried as swiftly as possible to all the Houses one after another; for he could not understand the new trouble that had come to his brethren. He spoke to the Archer, and the Archer assured him that so far as that House was concerned Leo had nothing to fear. The Waterman, the Fishes, and the Goat gave the same answer. They knew nothing of Leo, and cared less. They were the Houses, and they were busied in killing men.

At last he came to that very dark House where Cancer the Crab lies so still that you might think he was asleep if you did not see the ceaseless play and winnowing motion of the feathery branches round his mouth. That movement never ceases. It is like the eating of a smothered fire into rotten timber in that it is noiseless and without haste.

Leo stood in front of the Crab, and the half darkness allowed him a glimpse of that vast blue-black back and the motionless eyes. Now and again he thought that he heard some one sobbing, but the noise was very faint.

"Why do you trouble the children of men?" said Leo. There was no answer, and against his will Leo cried, "Why do you trouble us? What have we done that you should trouble us?"

This time Cancer replied, "What do I know or care? You were born into my House, and at the appointed time I shall come for you."

"When is the appointed time?" said Leo, stepping back from the restless movement of the mouth.

"When the full moon fails to call the full tide," said the Crab, "I shall come for the one. When the other has taken the earth by the shoulders, I shall take that other by the throat."

Leo lifted his hand to the apple of his throat, moistened his lips, and recovering himself, said:

"Must I be afraid for two, then?"

"For two," said the Crab, "and as many more as may come after."

"My brother, the Bull, had a better fate," said Leo, sullenly. "He is alone."

A hand covered his mouth before he could finish the sentence, and he found the Girl in his arms. Womanlike, she had not stayed where Leo had left her, but had hastened off at once to know the worst, and passing all the other Houses, had come straight to Cancer.

"That is foolish," said the Girl, whispering. "I have been waiting in the dark for long and long be-

fore you came. *Then* I was afraid. But now — " She put her head down on his shoulder and sighed a sigh of contentment.

"I am afraid now," said Leo.

"That is on my account," said the Girl. "I know it is, because I am afraid for your sake. Let us go, husband."

They went out of the darkness together and came back to the Earth, Leo very silent, and the Girl striving to cheer him. "My brother's fate is the better one," Leo would repeat from time to time, and at last he said: "Let us each go our own way and live alone till we die. We were born into the House of Cancer, and he will come for us."

"I know; I know. But where shall I go? And where will you sleep in the evening? But let us try. I will stay here. Do you go on."

Leo took six steps forward very slowly, and three long steps backward very quickly, and the third step set him again at the Girl's side. This time it was she who was begging him to go away and leave her, and he was forced to comfort her all through the night. That night decided them both never to leave each other for an instant, and when they had come to this decision they looked back at the darkness of the House of Cancer high above their heads, and with their arms round each other's necks laughed, "Ha! ha! ha!" exactly as

the children of men laughed. And that was the first time in their lives that they had ever laughed.

Next morning they returned to their proper home and saw the flowers and the sacrifices that had been laid before their doors by the villagers of the hills. Leo stamped down the fire with his heel, and the Girl flung the flower-wreaths out of sight, shuddering as she did so. When the villagers returned, as of custom, to see what had become of their offerings, they found neither roses nor burned flesh on the altars, but only a man and a woman, with frightened white faces, sitting hand in hand on the altar-steps.

"Are you not Virgo?" said a woman to the Girl. "I sent you flowers yesterday."

"Little sister," said the Girl, flushing to her forehead, "do not send any more flowers, for I am only a woman like yourself." The man and the woman went away doubtfully.

"Now, what shall we do?" said Leo.

"We must try to be cheerful, I think," said the Girl. "We know the very worst that can happen to us, but we do not know the best that love can bring us. We have a great deal to be glad of."

"The certainty of death?" said Leo.

"All the children of men have that certainty also; yet they laughed long before we ever knew how to laugh. We must learn to laugh, Leo. We have laughed once, already."

People who consider themselves Gods, as the Children of the Zodiac did, find it hard to laugh, because the Immortals know nothing worth laughter or tears. Leo rose up with a very heavy heart, and he and the Girl together went to and fro among men, their new fear of death behind them. First they laughed at a naked baby attempting to thrust its fat toes into its foolish pink mouth; next they laughed at a kitten chasing her own tail; and then they laughed at a boy trying to steal a kiss from a girl, and getting his ears boxed. Lastly, they laughed because the wind blew in their faces as they ran down a hill-side together, and broke panting and breathless into a knot of villagers at the bottom. The villagers laughed too at their flying clothes and wind-reddened faces; and in the evening gave them food and invited them to a dance on the grass, where everybody laughed through the mere joy of being able to dance.

That night Leo jumped up from the Girl's side, crying: "Every one of those people we met just now will die ——"

"So shall we," said the Girl sleepily. "Lie down again, dear." Leo could not see that her face was wet with tears.

But Leo was up and far across the fields, driven forward by the fear of death for himself and for the Girl, who was dearer to him than himself. Presently he came across the Bull drowsing in the

moonlight after a hard day's work, and looking through half-shut eyes at the beautiful straight furrows that he had made.

"Ho!" said the Bull. "So you have been told these things too. Which of the Houses holds your death?"

Leo pointed upwards to the dark House of the Crab, and groaned "And he will come for the Girl, too," he said.

"Well," said the Bull, "what will you do?"

Leo sat down on the dyke and said that he did not know.

"You cannot pull a plough," said the Bull, with a little touch of contempt. "I can, and that prevents me from thinking of the Scorpion."

Leo was angry, and said nothing till the dawn broke, and the cultivator came to yoke the Bull to his work.

"Sing," said the Bull, as the stiff, muddy ox-bow creaked and strained. "My shoulder is galled. Sing one of the songs that we sang when we thought we were all Gods together."

Leo stepped back into the canebrake, and lifted up his voice in a song of the Children of the Zodiac — the war-whoop of the young Gods who are afraid of nothing. At first he dragged the song along unwillingly, and then the song dragged him, and his voice rolled across the fields, and the Bull stepped to the tune, and the cultivator

banged his flanks out of sheer light-heartedness, and the furrows rolled away behind the plough more and more swiftly. Then the Girl came across the fields looking for Leo, and found him singing in the cane. She joined her voice to his, and the cultivator's wife brought her spinning into the open and listened with all her children round her. When it was time for the nooning, Leo and the Girl had sung themselves both thirsty and hungry, but the cultivator and his wife gave them rye bread and milk, and many thanks; and the Bull found occasion to say:

"You have helped me to do a full half field more than I should have done. But the hardest part of the day is to come, brother."

Leo wished to lie down and brood over the words of the Crab. The Girl went away to talk to the cultivator's wife and baby, and the afternoon ploughing began.

"Help us now," said the Bull. "The tides of the day are running down. My legs are very stiff. Sing, if you never sang before."

"To a mud-spattered villager?" said Leo.

"He is under the same doom as ourselves. Are you a coward?" said the Bull.

Leo flushed, and began again with a sore throat and a bad temper. Little by little he dropped away from the songs of the Children and made up a song as he went along; and this was a thing

he could never have done had he not met the Crab face to face. He remembered facts concerning cultivators and bullocks and rice-fields that he had not particularly noticed before the interview, and he strung them all together, growing more interested as he sang, and he told the cultivator much more about himself and his work than the cultivator knew. The Bull grunted approval as he toiled down the furrows for the last time that day, and the song ended, leaving the cultivator with a very good opinion of himself in his aching bones. The Girl came out of the hut where she had been keeping the children quiet, and talking woman-talk to the wife, and they all ate the evening meal together.

"Now yours must be a very pleasant life," said the cultivator; "sitting as you do on a dyke all day and singing just what comes into your head. Have you been at it long, you two—gipsies?"

"Ah!" lowed the Bull from his byre. "That's all the thanks you will ever get from men, brother."

"No. We have only just begun it," said the Girl; "but we are going to keep to it as long as we live. Are we not, Leo?"

"Yes," said he; and they went away hand in hand.

"You can sing beautifully, Leo," said she, as a wife will to her husband.

"What were you doing?" said he.

"I was talking to the mother and the babies," she said. "You would not understand the little things that make us women laugh."

"And — and I am to go on with this — this gipsy work?" said Leo.

"Yes, dear; and I will help you."

There is no written record of the life of Leo and of the Girl, so we cannot tell how Leo took to his new employment, which he detested. We are only sure that the Girl loved him when and wherever he sang; even when, after the song was done, she went round with the equivalent of a tambourine and collected the pence for the daily bread. There were times, too, when it was Leo's very hard task to console the Girl for the indignity of horrible praise that people gave him and her — for the silly wagging peacock feathers that they stuck in his cap, and the buttons and pieces of cloth that they sewed on his coat. Woman-like, she could advise and help to the end, but the meanness of the means revolted.

"What does it matter," Leo would say, "so long as the songs make them a little happier?" And they would go down the road and begin again on the old, old refrain — that whatever came or did not come, the children of men must not be afraid. It was heavy teaching at first, but in process of years Leo discovered that he could make men laugh and hold them listening to him

even when the rain fell. Yet there were people who would sit down and cry softly, though the crowd was yelling with delight, and there were people who maintained that Leo made them do this; and the Girl would talk to them in the pauses of the performance and do her best to comfort them. People would die, too, while Leo was talking and singing and laughing; for the Archer and the Scorpion and the Crab and the other Houses were as busy as ever. Sometimes the crowd broke, and were frightened, and Leo strove to keep them steady by telling them that this was cowardly; and sometimes they mocked at the Houses that were killing them, and Leo explained that this was even more cowardly than running away.

In their wanderings they came across the Bull, or the Ram, or the Twins, but all were too busy to do more than nod to each other across the crowd, and go on with their work. As the years rolled on even that recognition ceased, for the Children of the Zodiac had forgotten that they had ever been Gods working for the sake of men. The star Aldebaran was crusted with caked dirt on the Bull's forehead, the Ram's fleece was dusty and torn, and the Twins were only babies fighting over the cat on the door-step. It was then that Leo said, "Let us stop singing and making jokes." And it was then that the Girl said, "No." But

she did not know why she said "No" so energetically. Leo maintained that it was perversity, till she herself, at the end of a dusty day, made the same suggestion to him, and he said, "Most certainly not!" and they quarrelled miserably between the hedgerows, forgetting the meaning of the stars above them. Other singers and other talkers sprang up in the course of the years, and Leo, forgetting that there could never be too many of these, hated them for dividing the applause of the children of men, which he thought should be all his own. The Girl would grow angry too, and then the songs would be broken, and the jests fall flat for weeks to come, and the children of men would shout: "Go home, you two gipsies. Go home and learn something worth singing!"

After one of these sorrowful, shameful days, the Girl, walking by Leo's side through the fields, saw the full moon coming up over the trees, and she clutched Leo's arm, crying: "The time has come now. Oh, Leo, forgive me!"

"What is it?" said Leo. He was thinking of the other singers.

"My husband!" she answered, and she laid his hand upon her breast, and the breast that he knew so well was hard as stone. Leo groaned, remembering what the Crab had said.

"Surely we were Gods once," he cried.

"Surely we are Gods still," said the Girl. "Do

you not remember when you and I went to the House of the Crab and — were not very much afraid? And since then . . . we have forgotten what we were singing for — we sang for the pence, and, oh, we fought for them! — We, who are the Children of the Zodiac!"

"It was my fault," said Leo.

"How can there be any fault of yours that is not mine too?" said the Girl. "My time has come, but you will live longer, and . . ." The look in her eyes said all she could not say.

"Yes, I will remember that we are Gods," said Leo.

It is very hard, even for a child of the Zodiac who has forgotten his Godhead, to see his wife dying slowly, and to know that he cannot help her. The Girl told Leo in those last months of all that she had said and done among the wives and the babies at the back of the roadside performances, and Leo was astonished that he knew so little of her who had been so much to him. When she was dying she told him never to fight for pence or quarrel with the other singers; and, above all, to go on with his singing immediately after she was dead.

Then she died, and after he had buried her he went down the road to a village that he knew, and the people hoped that he would begin quarrelling with a new singer that had sprung up while he had been away. But Leo called him

"my brother." The new singer was newly married — and Leo knew it — and when he had finished singing Leo straightened himself, and sang the "Song of the Girl," which he had made coming down the road. Every man who was married, or hoped to be married, whatever his rank or colour, understood that song — even the bride leaning on the new husband's arm understood it too — and presently when the song ended, and Leo's heart was bursting in him, the men sobbed. "That was a sad tale," they said at last, "now make us laugh." Because Leo had known all the sorrow that a man could know, including the full knowledge of his own fall who had once been a God — he, changing his song quickly, made the people laugh till they could laugh no more. They went away feeling ready for any trouble in reason, and they gave Leo more peacock feathers and pence than he could count. Knowing that pence led to quarrels and that peacock feathers were hateful to the Girl, he put them aside and went away to look for his brothers, to remind them that they too were Gods.

He found the Bull goring the undergrowth in a ditch, for the Scorpion had stung him, and he was dying, not slowly, as the Girl had died, but quickly.

"I know all," the Bull groaned, as Leo came up. "I had forgotten too, but I remember now.

Go and look at the fields I ploughed. The furrows are straight. I forgot that I was a God, but I drew the plough perfectly straight, for all that. And you, brother?"

"I am not at the end of the ploughing," said Leo. "Does Death hurt?"

"No; but dying does," said the Bull, and he died. The cultivator who then owned him was much annoyed, for there was a field still unploughed.

It was after this that Leo made the Song of the Bull who had been a God and forgotten the fact, and he sang it in such a manner that half the young men in the world conceived that they too might be Gods without knowing it. A half of that half grew impossibly conceited, and died early. A half of the remainder strove to be Gods and failed, but the other half accomplished four times more work than they would have done under any other delusion.

Later, years later, always wandering up and down, and making the children of men laugh, he found the Twins sitting on the bank of a stream waiting for the Fishes to come and carry them away. They were not in the least afraid, and they told Leo that the woman of the House had a real baby of her own, and that when that baby grew old enough to be mischievous he would find a well-educated cat waiting to have its tail pulled.

Then the Fishes came for them, but all that the people saw was two children drowning in a brook; and though their foster-mother was very sorry, she hugged her own real baby to her breast, and was grateful that it was only the foundlings.

Then Leo made the Song of the Twins who had forgotten that they were Gods, and had played in the dust to amuse a foster-mother. That song was sung far and wide among the women. It caused them to laugh and cry and hug their babies closer to their hearts all in one breath; and some of the women who remembered the Girl said: "Surely that is the voice of Virgo. Only she could know so much about ourselves."

After those three songs were made, Leo sang them over and over again, till he was in danger of looking upon them as so many mere words, and the people who listened grew tired, and there came back to Leo the old temptation to stop singing once and for all. But he remembered the Girl's dying words, and went on.

One of his listeners interrupted him as he was singing. "Leo," said he, "I have heard you telling us not to be afraid for the past forty years. Can you not sing something new now?"

"No," said Leo; "it is the only song that I am allowed to sing. You must not be afraid of the Houses, even when they kill you."

The man turned to go, wearily, but there came

a whistling through the air, and the arrow of the Archer was seen skimming low above the earth, pointing to the man's heart. He drew himself up, and stood still waiting till the arrow struck home.

"I die," he said quietly. "It is well for me, Leo, that you sang for forty years."

"Are you afraid?" said Leo, bending over him.

"I am a man, not a God," said the man. "I should have run away but for your songs. My work is done, and I die without making a show of my fear."

"I am very well paid," said Leo to himself. "Now that I see what my songs are doing, I will sing better ones."

He went down the road, collected his little knot of listeners, and began the Song of the Girl. In the middle of his singing he felt the cold touch of the Crab's claw on the apple of his throat. He lifted his hand, choked, and stopped for an instant.

"Sing on, Leo," said the crowd. "The old song runs as well as ever it did."

Leo went on steadily till the end, with the cold fear at his heart. When his song was ended, he felt the grip on his throat tighten. He was old, he had lost the Girl, he knew that he was losing more than half his power to sing, he could scarcely walk to the diminishing crowds that waited for him, and could not see their faces when they stood about him. None the less he cried angrily to the Crab:

"Why have you come for me *now?*"

"You were born under my care. How can I help coming for you?" said the Crab, wearily. Every human being whom the Crab killed had asked that same question.

"But I was just beginning to know what my songs were doing," said Leo.

"Perhaps that is why," said the Crab, and the grip tightened.

"You said you would not come till I had taken the world by the shoulders," gasped Leo, falling back.

"I always keep my word. You have done that three times, with three songs. What more do you desire?"

"Let me live to see the world know it," pleaded Leo. "Let me be sure that my songs ——"

"Make men brave?" said the Crab. "Even then there would be one man who was afraid. The Girl was braver than you are. Come."

Leo was standing close to the restless, insatiable mouth. "I forgot," said he, simply. "The Girl was braver. But I am a God too, and I am not afraid."

"What is that to me?" said the Crab.

Then Leo's speech was taken from him, and he lay still and dumb, watching Death till he died.

Leo was the last of the Children of the Zodiac. After his death there sprang up a breed of little

mean men, whimpering and flinching and howling because the Houses killed them and theirs, who wished to live forever without any pain. They did not increase their lives, but they increased their own torments miserably, and there were no Children of the Zodiac to guide them, and the greater part of Leo's songs were lost.

Only he had carved on the Girl's tombstone the last verse of the Song of the Girl, which stands at the head of this story.

One of the children of men, coming thousands of years later, rubbed away the lichen, read the lines, and applied them to a trouble other than the one Leo meant. Being a man, men believed that he had made the verses himself; but they belong to Leo, the Child of the Zodiac, and teach, as he taught, that what comes or does not come, we must not be afraid.

THE STORY OF THE GADSBYS

POOR DEAR MAMMA

The wild hawk to the wind-swept sky,
The deer to the wholesome wold,
And the heart of a man to the heart of a maid,
As it was in the days of old.

Gypsy Song.

SCENE — *Interior of* MISS MINNIE THREEGAN'S *bed-room at Simla.* MISS THREEGAN, *in window-seat, turning over a drawerful of things.* MISS EMMA DEERCOURT, *bosom-friend, who has come to spend the day, sitting on the bed, manipulating the bodice of a ball-room frock and a bunch of artificial lilies of the valley. Time,* 5.30 P. M. *on a hot May afternoon.*

MISS DEERCOURT. And *he* said: "I shall *never* forget this dance," and, of course, I said: "Oh! how *can* you be so silly!" Do you think he meant anything, dear?

MISS THREEGAN. (*Extracting long lavender silk stocking from the rubbish.*) You know him better than *I* do.

MISS D. Oh, *do* be sympathetic, Minnie! I'm *sure* he does. At least I *would* be sure if he wasn't always riding with that odious Mrs. Hagan.

MISS T. I suppose so. How *does* one manage

to dance through one's heels first? Look at this — isn't it shameful? (*Spreads stocking-heel on open hand for inspection.*)

Miss D. Never mind that! You can't mend it. Help me with this hateful bodice. I've run the string *so*, and I've run the string *so*, and I *can't* make the fullness come right. Where would you put this? (*Waves lilies of the valley.*)

Miss T. As high up on the shoulder as possible.

Miss D. Am I quite tall enough? I know it makes May Olger look lop-sided.

Miss T. Yes, but May hasn't your shoulders. Hers are like a hock-bottle.

Bearer. (*Rapping at door.*) Captain Sahib *aya*.

Miss D. (*Jumping up wildly, and hunting for body, which she has discarded owing to the heat of the day.*) Captain Sahib! What Captain Sahib? Oh, good gracious, and I'm only half dressed! Well, I sha'n't bother.

Miss T. (*Calmly.*) You needn't. It isn't for us. That's Captain Gadsby. He is going for a ride with Mamma. He generally comes five days out of the seven.

Agonised Voice. (*From an inner apartment.*) Minnie, run out and give Captain Gadsby some tea, and tell him I shall be ready in ten minutes; and, O Minnie, come to me an instant, there's a dear girl!

Miss T. Oh, bother! (*Aloud.*) Very well,

Mamma. (*Exit, and reappears, after five minutes, flushed, and rubbing her fingers.*)

Miss D. You look pink. What has happened?

Miss T. (*In a stage whisper.*) A twenty-four-inch waist, and she won't let it out. Where *are* my bangles? (*Rummages on the toilet-table, and dabs at her hair with a brush in the interval.*)

Miss D. Who is this Captain Gadsby? I don't think I've met him.

Miss T. You *must* have. He belongs to the Harrar set. I've danced with him, but I've never talked to him. He's a big yellow man, just like a newly-hatched chicken, with an e-normous moustache. He walks like this (*imitates Cavalry swagger*), and he goes "Ha — Hmmm!" deep down in his throat when he can't think of anything to say. Mamma likes him. I don't.

Miss D. (*Abstractedly.*) Does he wax that moustache?

Miss T. (*Busy with powder-puff.*) Yes, I think so. Why?

Miss D. (*Bending over the bodice and sewing furiously.*) Oh, nothing — only ——

Miss T. (*Sternly.*) Only what? Out with it, Emma.

Miss D. Well, May Olger — she's engaged to Mr. Charteris, you know — said — Promise you won't repeat this?

Miss T. Yes, I promise. What did she say?

Miss D. That — that being kissed (*with a rush*) by a man who *didn't* wax his moustache was — like eating an egg without salt.

Miss T. (*At her full height, with crushing scorn.*) May Olger is a horrid, nasty *Thing*, and you can tell her I said so. I'm glad she doesn't belong to my set — I must go and feed this *man!* Do I look presentable?

Miss D. Yes, perfectly. Be quick and hand him over to your Mother, and then we can talk. *I* shall listen at the door to hear what you say to him.

Miss T. 'Sure I don't care. *I'm* not afraid of Captain Gadsby.

In proof of this swings into drawing-room with a mannish stride followed by two short steps, which produces the effect of a restive horse entering. Misses Captain Gadsby, *who is sitting in the shadow of the window-curtain, and gazes round helplessly.*

Captain Gadsby. (*Aside.*) The filly, by Jove! 'Must ha' picked up that action from the sire. (*Aloud, rising.*) Good evening, Miss Threegan.

Miss T. (*Conscious that she is flushing.*) Good evening, Captain Gadsby. Mamma told me to say that she will be ready in a few minutes. Won't you have some tea? (*Aside.*) I hope Mamma will be quick. What *am* I to say to

the creature? (*Aloud and abruptly.*) Milk and sugar?

CAPT. G. No sugar, tha-anks, and very little milk. Ha-Hmmm.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) If he's going to do that, I'm lost. I shall laugh. I *know* I shall!

CAPT. G. (*Pulling at his moustache and watching it sideways down his nose.*) Ha-Hmmm. (*Aside.*) 'Wonder what the little beast can talk about. 'Must make a shot at it.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) Oh, this is agonising. I *must* say something.

BOTH TOGETHER. Have you been ——

CAPT. G. I beg your pardon. You were going to say ——

MISS T. (*Who has been watching the moustache with awed fascination.*) Won't you have some eggs?

CAPT. G. (*Looking bewilderedly at the tea-table.*) Eggs! (*Aside.*) O Hades! She must have a nursery-tea at this hour. S'pose they've wiped her mouth and sent her to me while the Mother is getting on her duds. (*Aloud.*) No, thanks.

MISS T. (*Crimson with confusion.*) Oh! I didn't mean that. I wasn't thinking of mou--eggs for an instant. I mean *salt.* Won't you have some sa—sweets? (*Aside.*) He'll think me a raving lunatic. I wish Mamma would come.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) It *was* a nursery-tea and

she's ashamed of it. By Jove! She doesn't look half bad when she colours up like that. (*Aloud, helping himself from the dish.*) Have you seen those new chocolates at Peliti's?

Miss T. No, I made these myself. What are they like?

Capt. G. These! *De*-licious. (*Aside.*) And that's a fact.

Miss T. (*Aside.*) Oh, bother! he'll think I'm fishing for compliments. (*Aloud.*) No, Peliti's of course.

Capt. G. (*Enthusiastically.*) Not to compare with these. How d'you make them? I can't get my *khansamah* to understand the simplest thing beyond mutton and fowl.

Miss T. Yes? I'm not a *khansamah*, you know. Perhaps you frighten him. You should never frighten a servant He loses his head. It's very bad policy.

Capt. G. He's so awf'ly stupid.

Miss T. (*Folding her hands in her lap.*) You should call him quietly and say: "O *khansamah jee!*"

Capt. G. (*Getting interested.*) Yes? (*Aside.*) Fancy that little featherweight saying, "O *khansamah jee*" to my bloodthirsty Mir Khan!

Miss T. Then you should explain the dinner, dish by dish.

Capt. G. But I can't speak the vernacular.

MISS T. (*Patronisingly.*) You should pass the Higher Standard and try.

CAPT. G. I have, but I don't seem to be any the wiser. Are you?

MISS T. I never passed the Higher Standard. But the *khansamah* is very patient with me. He doesn't get angry when I talk about sheep's *topees*, or order *maunds* of grain when I mean *seers*.

CAPT. G. (*Aside, with intense indignation.*) I'd like to see Mir Khan being rude to that girl! Hullo! Steady the Buffs! (*Aloud.*) And do you understand about horses, too?

MISS T. A little — not very much. I can't doctor them, but I know what they ought to eat, and I am in charge of our stable.

CAPT. G. Indeed! You might help me, then. What ought a man to give his *sais* in the Hills? My ruffian says eight rupees, because everything is so dear.

MISS T. Six rupees a month, and one rupee Simla allowance — neither more nor less. And a grass-cut gets six rupees. That's better than buying grass in the bazar.

CAPT. G. (*Admiringly.*) How do you know?

MISS T. I have tried both ways.

CAPT. G. Do you ride much, then? I've never seen you on the Mall.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) I haven't passed him *more* than fifty times. (*Aloud.*) Nearly every day.

CAPT. G. By Jove! I didn't know that. Ha-Hmmm! (*Pulls at his moustache and is silent for forty seconds.*)

MISS T. (*Desperately, and wondering what will happen next.*) It looks beautiful. I shouldn't touch it if I were you. (*Aside.*) It's all Mamma's fault for not coming before. I *will* be rude!

CAPT. G. (*Bronzing under the tan and bringing down his hand very quickly.*) Eh! Wha-at! Oh, yes! Ha! Ha! (*Laughs uneasily.*) (*Aside.*) Well, of *all* the dashed cheek! I never had a woman say that to me yet. She must be a cool hand or else — Ah! that nursery-tea!

VOICE FROM THE UNKNOWN. Tchk! Tchk! Tchk!

CAPT. G. Good gracious! What's that?

MISS T. The dog, I think. (*Aside.*) Emma *has* been listening, and I'll never forgive her!

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) They don't keep dogs here. (*Aloud.*) 'Didn't sound like a dog, did it?

MISS T. Then it must have been the cat. Let's go into the verandah. What a lovely evening it is!

Steps into verandah and looks out across the hills into the sunset. The Captain follows.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Superb eyes! I wonder that I never noticed them before! (*Aloud.*) There's

going to be a dance at Viceregal Lodge on Wednesday. Can you spare me one?

Miss T. (*Shortly.*) No! I don't want any of your charity-dances. You only ask me because Mamma told you to. I hop and I bump. You *know* I do!

Capt. G. (*Aside.*) That's true, but little girls shouldn't understand these things. (*Aloud.*) No, on my word, I don't. You dance beautifully.

Miss T. Then why do you always stand out after half a dozen turns? I thought officers in the Army didn't tell fibs.

Capt. G. It wasn't a fib, believe me. I really *do* want the pleasure of a dance with you.

Miss T. (*Wickedly.*) Why? Won't Mamma dance with you any more?

Capt. G. (*More earnestly than the necessity demands.*) I wasn't thinking of your Mother. (*Aside.*) You little vixen!

Miss T. (*Still looking out of the window.*) Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon. I was thinking of something else.

Capt. G. (*Aside.*) Well! I wonder what she'll say next. I've never known a woman treat *me* like this before. I might be — Dash it, I might be an Infantry subaltern! (*Aloud.*) Oh, *please* don't trouble. I'm not worth thinking about. Isn't your Mother ready yet?

Miss T. I should think so; but promise me,

Captain Gadsby, you won't take poor dear Mamma twice round Jakko any more. It tires her so.

CAPT. G. She says that no exercise tires her.

MISS T. Yes, but she suffers afterwards. *You* don't know what rheumatism is, and you oughtn't to keep her out so late, when it gets chill in the evenings.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Rheumatism! I *thought* she came off her horse rather in a bunch. Whew! One lives and learns. (*Aloud.*) I'm sorry to hear that. She hasn't mentioned it to me.

MISS T. (*Flurried.*) Of course not! Poor dear Mamma never would. And you mustn't say that I told you, either. Promise me that you won't. Oh, Captain Gadsby, *promise* me you won't!

CAPT. G. I am dumb, or I shall be as soon as you've given me that dance, and another — if you can trouble yourself to think about me for a minute.

MISS T. But you won't like it one little bit. You'll be awfully sorry afterwards.

CAPT. G. I shall like it above all things, and I shall only be sorry that I didn't get more. (*Aside.*) Now what in the world am I saying?

MISS T. Very well. You will have only yourself to thank if your toes are trodden on. Shall we say Seven?

CAPT. G. And Eleven. (*Aside.*) She can't be more than eight stone, but, even then, it's

an absurdly small foot. (*Looks at his own riding-boots.*)

Miss T. They're beautifully shiny. I can almost see my face in them.

Capt. G. I was thinking whether I should have to go on crutches for the rest of my life if you trod on my toes.

Miss T. Very likely. Why not change Eleven for a square?

Capt. G. No, *please!* I want them both waltzes. Won't you write them down?

Miss T. *I* don't get so many dances that I shall confuse them. *You* will be the offender.

Capt. G. Wait and see! (*Aside.*) She doesn't dance perfectly, perhaps, but ——

Miss T. Your tea must have got cold by this time. Won't you have another cup?

Capt. G. No, thanks. Don't you think it's pleasanter out in the verandah? (*Aside.*) I never saw hair take that colour in the sunshine before. (*Aloud.*) It's like one of Dicksee's pictures.

Miss T. Yes! It's a wonderful sunset, isn't it? (*Bluntly.*) But what do *you* know about Dicksee's pictures?

Capt. G. I go Home occasionally. And I used to know the Galleries. (*Nervously.*) You mustn't think me only a Philistine with — a moustache.

Miss T. Don't! *Please* don't! I'm *so* sorry for what I said then. I was *horribly* rude. It slipped

out before I thought. Don't you know the temptation to say frightful and shocking things just for the mere sake of saying them? I'm afraid I gave way to it.

CAPT. G. (*Watching the girl as she flushes.*) I *think* I know the feeling. It would be terrible if we all yielded to it, wouldn't it? For instance, I might say ——

POOR DEAR MAMMA. (*Entering habited, hatted, and booted.*) Ah, Captain Gadsby! 'Sorry to keep you waiting. 'Hope you haven't been bored. 'My little girl been talking to you?

MISS T. (*Aside.*) I'm not sorry I spoke about the rheumatism. I'm not! I'm NOT! I only wish I'd mentioned the corns too.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) What a shame! I wonder how old she is. It never occurred to me before. (*Aloud.*) We've been discussing "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" in the verandah.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) Nice man! He knows that quotation. He *isn't* a Philistine with a moustache. (*Aloud.*) Good-bye, Captain Gadsby. (*Aside.*) What a huge hand and *what* a squeeze! I don't suppose he meant it, but he has driven the rings into my fingers.

POOR DEAR MAMMA. Has Vermillion come round yet? Oh, yes! Captain Gadsby, don't you think that the saddle is too far forward? (*They pass into the front verandah.*)

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) How the dickens should I know what she prefers? She told me that she doted on horses. (*Aloud.*) I think it is.

MISS T. (*Coming out into front verandah.*) Oh! Bad Buldoo! I must speak to him for this. He has taken up the curb two links, and Vermillion hates that. (*Passes out and to horse's head.*)

CAPT. G. Let me do it!

MISS T. No, Vermillion understands me. Don't you, old man? (*Looses curb-chain skilfully, and pats horse on nose and throttle.*) Poor Vermillion! *Did* they want to cut his chin off? There!

CAPTAIN GADSBY *watches the interlude with undisguised admiration.*

POOR DEAR MAMMA. (*Tartly to* MISS T.) You've forgotten your guest, I think, dear.

MISS T. Good gracious! So I have! Good-bye. (*Retreats indoors hastily.*)

POOR DEAR MAMMA. (*Bunching reins in fingers, hampered by too tight gauntlets.*) Captain Gadsby!

CAPTAIN GADSBY *stoops and makes the foot-rest.*

POOR DEAR MAMMA *blunders, halts too long, and breaks through it.*

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Can't hold up eleven stone for ever. It's all your rheumatism. (*Aloud.*) Can't imagine why I was so clumsy. (*Aside.*)

Now Little Featherweight would have gone up like a bird.

They ride out of the garden. The Captain falls back.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) How that habit catches her under the arms! Ugh!

POOR DEAR MAMMA. (*With the worn smile of sixteen seasons, the worse for exchange.*) You're dull this afternoon, Captain Gadsby.

CAPT. G. (*Spurring up wearily.*) Why did you keep me waiting so long?

Et cætera, et cætera, et cætera.

(AN INTERVAL OF THREE WEEKS.)

GILDED YOUTH. (*Sitting on railings opposite Town Hall.*) Hullo, Gaddy! 'Been trotting out the Gorgonzola! We all thought it was the Gorgon you're mashing.

CAPT. G. (*With withering emphasis.*) You young cub! What the —— does it matter to you? (*Proceeds to read* GILDED YOUTH *a lecture on discretion and deportment, which crumbles later like a Chinese Lantern. Departs fuming.*)

(FURTHER INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.)

SCENE. — *Exterior of New Simla Library on a foggy evening.* MISS THREEGAN *and* MISS DEERCOURT *meet among the 'rickshaws.* MISS T. *is carrying a bundle of books under her left arm.*

MISS D. (*Level intonation.*) Well?

MISS T. (*Ascending intonation.*) Well?

MISS D. (*Capturing her friend's left arm, taking away all the books, placing books in 'rickshaw, returning to arm, securing hand by the third finger, and investigating.*) Well! You *bad* girl! And you *never* told me.

MISS T. (*Demurely.*) He — he — he only spoke yesterday afternoon.

MISS D. Bless you, dear! And I'm to be bridesmaid, aren't I? You *know* you promised *ever* so long ago.

MISS T. Of course. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. (*Gets into 'rickshaw.*) O Emma!

MISS D. (*With intense interest.*) Yes, dear?

MISS T. (*Piano.*) It's quite true — about — the — egg.

MISS D. What egg?

MISS T. (*Pianissimo prestissimo.*) The egg without the salt. (*Forte.*) *Chalo ghar ko jaldi, jhampani!* (Go home, *jhampani.*)

THE WORLD WITHOUT

Certain people of importance.

SCENE.—*Smoking-room of the Degchi Club. Time*, 10.30 P. M. *of a stuffy night in the Rains. Four men dispersed in picturesque attitudes and easy-chairs. To these enter* BLAYNE *of the Irregular Moguls, in evening dress.*

BLAYNE. Phew! The Judge ought to be hanged in his own store-godown. Hi, *khitmatgar! Poora* whiskey-peg, to take the taste out of my mouth.

CURTISS. (*Royal Artillery.*) That's it, is it? What the deuce made you dine at the Judge's? You know his *bandobust.*

BLAYNE. 'Thought it couldn't be worse than the Club, but I'll swear he buys ullaged liquor and doctors it with gin and ink. (*Looking round the room.*) Is this all of you to-night?

DOONE. (*P. W. D.*) Anthony was called out at dinner. Mingle had a pain in his tummy.

CURTISS. Miggy dies of cholera once a week in the Rains, and gets drunk on chlorodyne in between. 'Good little chap, though. Any one at the Judge's, Blayne?

BLAYNE. Cockley and his Memsahib looking awfully white and fagged. 'Female girl — couldn't catch the name — on her way to the Hills, under the Cockleys' charge — the Judge, and Markyn fresh from Simla — disgustingly fit.

CURTISS. Good Lord, how truly magnificent! Was there enough ice? When I mangled garbage there I got one whole lump — nearly as big as a walnut. What had Markyn to say for himself?

BLAYNE. 'Seems that every one is having a fairly good time up there in spite of the rain. By Jove, that reminds me! I knew I hadn't come across just for the pleasure of your society. News! Great news! Markyn told me.

DOONE. Who's dead now?

BLAYNE. No one that I know of; but Gaddy's hooked at last!

DROPPING CHORUS. How much? The Devil! Markyn was pulling your leg. Not GADDY!

BLAYNE. (*Humming.*) "Yea, verily, verily, verily! Verily, verily, I say unto thee. Theodore, the gift o' God! Our Phillup! It's been given out up above.

MACKESY. (*Barrister-at-Law.*) Huh! Women will give out anything. What does accused say?

BLAYNE. Markyn told me that he congratulated him warily — one hand held out, t'other ready to guard. Gaddy turned pink and said it was so.

CURTISS. Poor old Gaddy! They all do it. Who's *she?* Let's hear the details.

BLAYNE. She's a girl—daughter of a Colonel Somebody.

DOONE. Simla's stiff with Colonels' daughters. Be more explicit.

BLAYNE. Wait a shake. What *was* her name? Three—something. Three ——

CURTISS. Stars, perhaps. Gaddy knows *that* brand.

BLAYNE. Threegan — Minnie Threegan.

MACKESY. Threegan! Isn't she a little bit of a girl with red hair?

BLAYNE. 'Bout that — from what Markyn said.

MACKESY. Then I've met her. She was at Lucknow last season. 'Owned a permanently juvenile Mamma, and danced damnably. I say, Jervoise, you knew the Threegans, didn't you?

JERVOISE. (*Civilian of twenty-five years' service, waking up from his doze.*) Eh? What's that? Knew who? How? I thought I was at Home, confound you!

MACKESY. The Threegan girl's engaged, so Blayne says.

JERVOISE. (*Slowly.*) Engaged—engaged! Bless my soul! I'm getting an old man! Little Minnie Threegan engaged! It was only the other day I went home with them in the *Surat*—no, the *Massilia* — and she was crawling about on her hands

and knees among the *ayahs*. 'Used to call me the "*Tick Tack Sahib*" because I showed her my watch. And that was in Sixty-Seven — no, Seventy. Good God, how time flies! I'm an old man. I remember when Threegan married Miss Derwent — daughter of old Hooky Derwent — but that was before your time. And so the little baby's engaged to have a little baby of her own! Who's the other fool?

MACKESY. Gadsby of the Pink Hussars.

JERVOISE. 'Never met him. Threegan lived in debt, married in debt, and'll die in debt. 'Must be glad to get the girl off his hands.

BLAYNE. Gaddy has money — lucky devil. Place at Home, too.

DOONE. He comes of first-class stock. 'Can't quite understand his being caught by a Colonel's daughter, and (*looking cautiously round room*) Black Infantry at that! No offence to you, Blayne.

BLAYNE. (*Stiffly.*) Not much, tha-anks.

CURTISS. (*Quoting motto of Irregular Moguls.*) "We are what we are," eh, old man? But Gaddy was such a superior animal as a rule. Why didn't he go Home and pick his wife there?

MACKESY. They are all alike when they come to the turn into the straight. About thirty a man begins to get sick of living alone ——

CURTISS. And of the eternal muttony-chop in the morning.

DOONE. It's dead goat as a rule, but go on, Mackesy.

MACKESY. If a man's once taken that way nothing will hold him. Do you remember Benoit of your service, Doone? They transferred him to Tharanda when his time came, and he married a platelayer's daughter, or something of that kind. She was the only female about the place.

DOONE. Yes, poor brute. That smashed Benoit's chances of promotion altogether. Mrs. Benoit used to ask: "Was you goin' to the dance this evenin'?"

CURTISS. Hang it all! Gaddy hasn't married beneath him. There's no tar-brush in the family, I suppose.

JERVOISE. Tar-brush! Not an anna. You young fellows talk as though the man was doing the girl an honour in marrying her. You're all too conceited — nothing's good enough for you.

BLAYNE. Not even an empty Club, a dam' bad dinner at the Judge's, and a Station as sickly as a hospital. You're quite right. We're a set of Sybarites.

DOONE. Luxurious dogs, wallowing in ——

CURTISS. Prickly heat between the shoulders. I'm covered with it. Let's hope Beora will be cooler.

BLAYNE. Whew! Are *you* ordered into camp, too? I thought the Gunners had a clean sheet.

CURTISS. No, worse luck. Two cases yesterday — one died — and if we have a third, out we go. Is there any shooting at Beora, Doone?

DOONE. The country's under water, except the patch by the Grand Trunk Road. I was there yesterday, looking at a *bund*, and came across four poor devils in their last stage. It's rather bad from here to Kuchara.

CURTISS. Then we're pretty certain to have a heavy go of it. Heigho! I shouldn't mind changing places with Gaddy for a while. 'Sport with Amaryllis in the shade of the Town Hall, and all that. Oh, why doesn't somebody come and marry me, instead of letting me go into cholera-camp?

MACKESY. Ask the Committee.

CURTISS. You ruffian! You'll stand me another peg for that. Blayne, what will you take? Mackesy is fine on moral grounds. Doone, have you any preference?

DOONE. Small glass Kümmel, please. Excellent carminative, these days. Anthony told me so.

MACKESY. (*Signing voucher for four drinks.*) Most unfair punishment. I only thought of Curtiss as Actæon being chivied round the billiard tables by the nymphs of Diana.

BLAYNE. Curtiss would have to import his nymphs by train. Mrs. Cockley's the only woman in the Station. She won't leave Cockley, and he's doing his best to get her to go.

CURTISS. Good, indeed! Here's Mrs. Cockley's health. To the only wife in the Station and a damned brave woman!

OMNES. (*Drinking.*) A damned brave woman!

BLAYNE. I suppose Gaddy will bring his wife here at the end of the hot weather. They are going to be married almost immediately, I believe

CURTISS. Gaddy may thank his luck that the Pink Hussars are all detachment and no headquarters this hot weather, or he'd be torn from the arms of his love as sure as death. Have you ever noticed the thorough-minded way British Cavalry take to cholera? It's because they are so expensive. If the Pinks had stood fast here, they would have been out in camp a month ago. Yes, I should decidedly like to be Gaddy.

MACKESY. He'll go Home after he's married. and send in his papers — see if he doesn't.

BLAYNE. Why shouldn't he? Hasn't he money? Would any one of us be here if we weren't paupers?

DOONE. Poor old pauper! What has become of the six hundred you rooked from our table last month?

BLAYNE. It took unto itself wings. I think an enterprising tradesman got some of it, and a *shroff* gobbled the rest — or else I spent it.

CURTISS. Gaddy never had dealings with a *shroff* in his life.

DOONE. Virtuous Gaddy! If *I* had three thousand a month, paid from England, I don't think I'd deal with a *shroff* either.

MACKSEY. (*Yawning.*) Oh, it's a sweet life. I wonder whether matrimony would make it sweeter.

CURTISS. Ask Cockley — with his wife dying by inches!

BLAYNE. Go Home and get a fool of a girl to come out to — what is it Thackeray says? — "the splendid palace of an Indian pro-consul."

DOONE. Which reminds me. My quarters leak like a sieve. I had fever last night from sleeping in a swamp. And the worst of it is, one can't do anything to a roof till the Rains are over.

CURTISS. What's wrong with you? *You* haven't eighty rotting Tommies to take into a running stream.

DOONE. No: but I'm mixed boils and bad language. I'm a regular Job all over my body. It's sheer poverty of blood, and I don't see any chance of getting richer — either way.

BLAYNE. Can't you take leave?

DOONE. That's the pull you Army men have over us. Ten days are nothing in your sight. *I'm* so important that Government can't find a substitute if I go away. Ye-es, I'd like to be Gaddy, whoever his wife may be.

CURTISS. You've passed the turn of life that Mackesy was speaking of.

DOONE. Indeed I have, but I never yet had the brutality to ask a woman to share my life out here.

BLAYNE. On my soul I believe you're right. I'm thinking of Mrs. Cockley. The woman's an absolute wreck.

DOONE. Exactly. Because she stays down here. The only way to keep her fit would be to send her to the Hills for eight months — and the same with any woman. I fancy I see myself taking a wife on those terms.

MACKESY. With the rupee at one and sixpence. The little Doones would be little Dehra Doones, with a fine Mussoorie *chi-chi* anent to bring Home for the holidays.

CURTISS. And a pair of be-ewtiful *sambhur*-horns for Doone to wear, free of expense, presented by ——

DOONE. Yes, it's an enchanting prospect. By the way, the rupee hasn't done falling yet. The time will come when we shall think ourselves lucky if we only lose half our pay.

CURTISS. Surely a third's loss enough. Who gains by the arrangement? That's what I want to know.

BLAYNE. The Silver Question! I'm going to bed if you begin squabbling. Thank Goodness, here's Anthony — looking like a ghost.

Enter ANTHONY, *Indian Medical Staff, very white and tired.*

ANTHONY. 'Evening, Blayne. It's raining in sheets. *Whiskey peg lao, khitmatgar.* The roads are something ghastly.

CURTISS. How's Mingle?

ANTHONY. Very bad, and more frightened. I handed him over to Fewton. Mingle might just as well have called him in the first place, instead of bothering me.

BLAYNE. He's a nervous little chap. What has he got, this time?

ANTHONY. 'Can't quite say. A very bad tummy and a blue funk so far. He asked me at once if it was cholera, and I told him not to be a fool. That soothed him.

CURTISS. Poor devil! The funk does half the business in a man of that build.

ANTHONY. (*Lighting a cheroot.*) I firmly believe the funk will kill him if he stays down. You know the amount of trouble he's been giving Fewton for the last three weeks. He's doing his very best to frighten himself into the grave.

GENERAL CHORUS. Poor little devil! Why doesn't he get away?

ANTHONY. 'Can't. He has his leave all right, but he's so dipped he can't take it, and I don't

think his name on paper would raise four annas. That's in confidence, though.

MACKESY. All the Station knows it.

ANTHONY. "I suppose I shall have to die here," he said, squirming all across the bed. He's quite made up his mind to Kingdom Come. And I *know* he has nothing more than a wet-weather tummy if he could only keep a hand on himself.

BLAYNE. That's bad. That's *very* bad. Poor little Miggy. Good little chap, too. I say——

ANTHONY. What do you say?

BLAYNE. Well, look here — anyhow. If it's like that — as you say — I say fifty.

CURTISS. I say fifty.

MACKESY. I go twenty better.

DOONE. Bloated Crœsus of the Bar! I say fifty. Jervoise, what do you say? Hi! Wake up!

JERVOISE. Eh? What's that? What's that?

CURTISS. We want a hundred rupees from you. You're a bachelor drawing a gigantic income, and there's a man in a hole.

JERVOISE. What man? Any one dead?

BLAYNE. No, but he'll die if you don't give the hundred. Here! Here's a peg-voucher. You can see what we've signed for, and Anthony's man will come round to-morrow to collect it. So there will be no trouble.

JERVOISE. (*Signing.*) One hundred, E. M. J. There you are. (*Feebly.*) It isn't one of your jokes, is it?

BLAYNE. No, it really *is* wanted. Anthony, you were the biggest poker-winner last week, and you've defrauded the tax-collector too long. Sign!

ANTHONY. Let's see. Three fifties and a seventy — two twenty — three twenty — say four hundred and twenty. That'll give him a month clear at the Hills. Many thanks, you men. I'll send round the *chaprassi* to-morrow.

CURTISS. You must engineer his taking the stuff, and of course you mustn't ——

ANTHONY. *Of* course. It would never do. He'd weep with gratitude over his evening drink.

BLAYNE. That's just what he would do, damn him. Oh! I say, Anthony, you pretend to know everything. Have you heard about Gaddy?

ANTHONY. No. Divorce Court at last?

BLAYNE. Worse. He's engaged!

ANTHONY. How much? He *can't* be!

BLAYNE. He *is*. He's going to be married in a few weeks. Markyn told me at the Judge's this evening. It's *pukka*.

ANTHONY. You don't say so? Holy Moses! There'll be a shine in the tents of Kedar.

CURTISS. 'Regiment cut up rough, think you?

ANTHONY. 'Don't know anything about the Regiment.

MACKESY. It is bigamy, then?

ANTHONY. Maybe. Do you mean to say that

you men have forgotten, or is there more charity in the world than I thought?

DOONE. You don't look pretty when you are trying to keep a secret. You bloat. Explain.

ANTHONY. Mrs. Herriott!

BLAYNE. (*After a long pause, to the room generally.*) It's my notion that we are a set of fools.

MACKESY. Nonsense. *That* business was knocked on the head last season. Why, young Mallard ——

ANTHONY. Mallard was a candlestick, paraded as such. Think awhile. Recollect last season and the talk then. Mallard or no Mallard, did Gaddy ever talk to any other woman?

CURTISS. There's something in that. It *was* slightly noticeable, now you come to mention it. But she's at Naini Tal and he's at Simla.

ANTHONY. *He* had to go to Simla to look after a globe-trotter relative of his — a person with a title. Uncle or aunt.

BLAYNE. And there he got engaged. No law prevents a man growing tired of a woman.

ANTHONY. Except that he mustn't do it till the woman is tired of him. And the Herriott woman was not that.

CURTISS. She may be now. Two months of Naini Tal work wonders.

DOONE. Curious thing how some women carry a Fate with them. There was a Mrs. Deegie in

the Central Provinces whose men invariably fell away and got married. It became a regular proverb with us when I was down there. I remember three men desperately devoted to her, and they all, one after another, took wives.

CURTISS. That's odd. Now I should have thought that Mrs. Deegie's influence would have led them to take other men's wives. It ought to have made them afraid of the judgment of Providence.

ANTHONY. Mrs. Herriott will make Gaddy afraid of something more than the judgment of Providence, I fancy.

BLAYNE. Supposing things are as you say, he'll be a fool to face her. He'll sit tight at Simla.

ANTHONY. 'Shouldn't be a bit surprised if he went off to Naini to explain. He's an unaccountable sort of man, and she's likely to be a more than unaccountable woman.

DOONE. What makes you take her character away so confidently?

ANTHONY. *Primum tempus.* Gaddy was her first, and a woman doesn't allow her first man to drop away without expostulation. She justifies the first transfer of affection to herself by swearing that it is for ever and ever. Consequently ——

BLAYNE. Consequently, we are sitting here till past one o'clock, talking scandal like a set of Station cats. Anthony, it's all your fault. We

were perfectly respectable till you came in. Go to bed. I'm off. Good-night all.

Curtiss. Past one! It's past two, by Jove, and here's the *khit* coming for the late charge. Just Heavens! One, two, three, four, *five* rupees to pay for the pleasure of saying that a poor little beast of a woman is no better than she should be. I'm ashamed of myself. Go to bed, you slanderous villains, and if I'm sent to Beora to-morrow, be prepared to hear I'm dead before paying my card account!

THE TENTS OF KEDAR

Only why should it be with pain at all,
Why must I 'twixt the leaves of coronal
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why should the other women know so much,
And talk together: — Such the look and such
The smile he used to love with, then as now.

Any Wife to any Husband.

SCENE.—*A Naini Tal dinner for thirty-four. Plate, wines, crockery, and khitmatgars carefully calculated to scale of Rs. 6000 per mensem, less Exchange. Table split lengthwise by bank of flowers.*

MRS. HERRIOTT. (*After conversation has risen to proper pitch.*) Ah! 'Didn't see you in the crush in the drawing-room. (*Sotto voce.*) Where *have* you been all this while, Pip?

CAPTAIN GADSBY. (*Turning from regularly ordained dinner partner and settling hock glasses.*) Good-evening. (*Sotto voce.*) Not quite so loud another time. You've no notion how your voice carries. (*Aside.*) So much for shirking the written explanation. It'll have to be a verbal one now. Sweet prospect! How on earth am I to tell her that I am a re-

spectable, engaged member of society and it's all over between us?

MRS. H. I've a heavy score against you. Where were you at the Monday Pop? Where were you on Tuesday? Where were you at the Lamonts' tennis? I was looking everywhere.

CAPT. G. For me! Oh, I was alive somewhere, I suppose. (*Aside.*) It's for Minnie's sake, but it's going to be dashed unpleasant.

MRS. H. Have I done anything to offend you? I never meant it if I have. I couldn't help going for a ride with the Vaynor man. It was promised a week before you came up.

CAPT. G. I didn't know ——

MRS. H. It really *was*.

CAPT. G. Anything about it, I mean.

MRS. H. What has upset you to-day? All these days? You haven't been near me for four whole days — nearly one hundred hours. Was it *kind* of you, Pip? And I've been looking forward so much to your coming.

CAPT. G. Have you?

MRS. H. You *know* I have! I've been as foolish as a school-girl about it. I made a little calendar and put it in my card-case, and every time the twelve-o'clock gun went off I scratched out a square and said: "That brings me nearer to Pip. *My* Pip!"

CAPT. G. (*With an uneasy laugh.*) What will Mackler think if you neglect him so?

MRS. H. And it hasn't brought you nearer You seem farther away than ever. Are you sulking about something? I know your temper.

CAPT. G. No.

MRS. H. Have I grown old in the last few months, then? (*Reaches forward to bank of flowers for menu-card.*)

PARTNER ON LEFT. Allow me. (*Hands menu-card.* MRS. H. *keeps her arm at full stretch for three seconds.*)

MRS. H. (*To partner.*) Oh, thanks. I didn't see. (*Turns right again.*) Is anything in me changed at all?

CAPT. G. For Goodness' sake go on with your dinner! You must eat something. Try one of those cutlet arrangements. (*Aside.*) And I fancied she had good shoulders, once upon a time! What an ass a man can make of himself!

MRS. H. (*Helping herself to a paper frill, seven peas, some stamped carrots, and a spoonful of gravy.*) That isn't an answer. Tell me whether I have done anything.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) If it isn't ended here. there will be a ghastly scene somewhere else. If only I'd written to her and stood the racket — at long range! (*To Khitmatgar.*) *Han! Simpkin do.* (*Aloud.*) I'll tell you later on.

MRS. H. Tell me *now.* It must be some foolish misunderstanding, and you know that there was

to be nothing of that sort between us. *We*, of all people in the world, can't afford it. Is it the Vaynor man, and don't you like to say so? On my honour ——

CAPT. G. I haven't given the Vaynor man a thought.

MRS. H. But how d'you know that *I* haven't?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Here's my chance, and may the Devil help me through with it. (*Aloud and measuredly.*) Believe me, I do not care how often or how tenderly you think of the Vaynor man.

MRS. H. I wonder if you mean that. — Oh, what *is* the good of squabbling and pretending to misunderstand when you are only up for so short a time? Pip, don't be a stupid!

Follows a pause, during which he crosses his left leg over his right and continues his dinner.

CAPT. G. (*In answer to the thunderstorm in her eyes.*) Corns — my worst.

MRS. H. Upon my word, you are the very rudest man in the world! I'll *never* do it again.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) No, I don't think you will; but I wonder what you will do before it's all over. (*To Khitmatgar.*) *Thorah ur Simpkin do.*

MRS. H. Well! Haven't you the grace to apologise, bad man?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) I mustn't let it drift back *now*. Trust a woman for being as blind as a bat when she won't see.

MRS. H. I'm waiting: or would you like me to dictate a form of apology?

CAPT. G. (*Desperately.*) By all means dictate.

MRS. H. (*Lightly.*) Very well. Rehearse your several Christian names after me and go on: "Profess my sincere repentance."

CAPT. G. "Sincere repentance."

MRS. H. "For having behaved——"

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) At last! I wish to Goodness she'd look away. (*Aloud.*) "For having behaved"—as I have behaved, and declare that I am thoroughly and heartily sick of the whole business, and take this opportunity of making clear my intention of ending it, now, henceforward, and forever. (*Aside.*) If any one had told me I should be such a blackguard——!

MRS. H. (*Shaking a spoonful of potato chips into her plate.*) That's not a pretty joke.

CAPT. G. No. It's a reality. (*Aside.*) I wonder if smashes of this kind are always so raw.

MRS. H. Really, Pip, you're getting more absurd every day.

CAPT. G. I don't think you quite understand me. Shall I repeat it?

MRS. H. No! For pity's sake don't do that. It's too terrible, even in fun.

CAPT. G. I'll let her think it over for a while. But I ought to be horse-whipped.

MRS. H. I want to know what you meant by what you said just now.

CAPT. G. Exactly what I said. No less.

MRS. H. But what have I done to deserve it? What *have* I done?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) If she only wouldn't look at me! (*Aloud and very slowly, his eyes on his plate.*) D'you remember that evening in July, before the Rains broke, when you said that the end would have to come sooner or later — and you wondered for which of us it would come first?

MRS. H. Yes! I was only joking. And you swore that, as long as there was breath in your body, it should *never* come. And I believed you.

CAPT. G. (*Fingering menu-card.*) Well, it has. That's all.

A long pause, during which MRS. H. *bows her head and rolls the bread-twist into little pellets:* G. *stares at the oleanders.*

MRS. H. (*Throwing back her head and laughing naturally.*) They train us women well, don't they, Pip?

CAPT. G. (*Brutally, touching shirt-stud.*) So far as the expression goes. (*Aside.*) It isn't in her nature to take things quietly. There'll be an explosion yet.

MRS. H. (*With a shudder.*) Thank you. B-but even Red Indians allow people to wriggle when they're being tortured, I believe. (*Slips fan from girdle and fans slowly: rim of fan level with chin.*)

PARTNER ON LEFT. Very close to-night, isn't it? You find it too much for you?

MRS. H. Oh, no, not in the least. But they really ought to have punkahs, even in your cool Naini Tal, oughtn't they? (*Turns, dropping fan and raising eyebrows.*)

CAPT. G. It's all right. (*Aside.*) Here comes the storm!

MRS. H. (*Her eyes on the tablecloth: fan ready in right hand.*) It was very cleverly managed, Pip, and I congratulate you. You swore — you never contented yourself with merely saying a thing — you *swore* that, as far as lay in your power, you'd make my wretched life pleasant for me. And you've denied me the consolation of breaking down. I should have done it — indeed I should. A woman would hardly have thought of this refinement, my kind, considerate friend. (*Fan-guard as before.*) You have explained things so tenderly and truthfully, too! You haven't spoken or written a word of warning, and you have let me believe in you till the last minute. You haven't condescended to give me your *reason* yet. No! A woman could not have managed it half so well. Are there many *men* like you in the world?

CAPT. G. I'm sure I don't know. (*To Khitmatgar.*) Ohé! *Simpkin do.*

MRS. H. You call yourself a man of the world, don't you? Do men of the world behave like Devils when they do a woman the honour to get tired of her?

CAPT. G. I'm sure I don't know. Don't speak so loud!

MRS. H. Keep us respectable, O Lord, whatever happens! Don't be afraid of my compromising you. You've chosen your ground far too well, and I've been properly brought up. (*Lowering fan.*) Haven't you *any* pity, Pip, except for yourself?

CAPT. G. Wouldn't it be rather impertinent of me to say that I'm sorry for you?

MRS. H. I think you have said it once or twice before. You're growing very careful of my feelings. My God, Pip, I was a good woman once! You *said* I was. You've made me what I am. What are you going to do with me? What are you going to do with me? Won't you *say* that you are sorry? (*Helps herself to iced asparagus.*)

CAPT. G. I am sorry for you, if you want the pity of such a brute as I am. I'm *awf'ly* sorry for you.

MRS. H. Rather tame for a man of the world. Do you think that that admission clears you?

CAPT. G. What can I do? I can only tell you

what I think of myself. You can't think worse than that?

MRS. H. Oh, yes, I can! And now, will you tell me the reason of all this? Remorse? Has Bayard been suddenly conscience-stricken?

CAPT. G. (*Angrily, his eyes still lowered.*) No! The thing has come to an end on my side. That's all. *Mafisch!*

MRS. H. "That's all. *Mafisch!*" As though I were a Cairene Dragoman. You used to make prettier speeches. D'you remember when you said ——?

CAPT. G. For Heaven's sake don't bring that back! Call me anything you like and I'll admit it ——

MRS. H. But you don't care to be reminded of old lies? If I could hope to hurt you one-tenth as much as you have hurt me to-night — No, I wouldn't — I couldn't do it — liar though you are.

CAPT. G. I've spoken the truth.

MRS. H. My *dear* Sir, you flatter yourself. You have lied over the reason. Pip, remember that I know you as you don't know yourself. You have been everything to me, though you are — (*Fan-guard.*) Oh, what a contemptible *Thing* it is! And so you are merely tired of me?

CAPT. G. Since you insist upon my repeating it — Yes.

Mrs. H. Lie the first. I wish I knew a coarser word. Lie seems so ineffectual in your case. The fire has just died out and there is no fresh one? Think for a minute, Pip, if you care whether I despise you more than I do. Simply *Mafisch*, is it?

Capt. G. Yes. (*Aside.*) I think I deserve this.

Mrs. H. Lie number two. Before the next glass chokes you, tell me her name.

Capt. G. (*Aside.*) I'll make her pay for dragging Minnie into the business! (*Aloud.*) Is it likely?

Mrs. H. *Very* likely if you thought that it would flatter your vanity. You'd cry my name on the housetops to make people turn round.

Capt. G. I wish I had. There would have been an end of this business.

Mrs. H. Oh, no, there would not — And so you were going to be virtuous and *blasé*, were you? To come to me and say: "I've done with you. The incident is clo-osed." I ought to be proud of having kept such a man so long.

Capt. G. (*Aside.*) It only remains to pray for the end of the dinner. (*Aloud.*) You know what I think of myself.

Mrs. H. As it's the only person in the world you ever *do* think of, and as I know your mind thoroughly, I do. You want to get it all over and — Oh, I can't keep you back! And you're

going—think of it, Pip—to throw me over for another woman. And you swore that all other women were— Pip, my Pip! She *can't* care for you as I do. Believe me, she can't! Is it any one that I know?

CAPT. G. Thank Goodness it isn't. (*Aside.*) I expected a cyclone, but not an earthquake.

MRS. H. She *can't!* Is there anything that I wouldn't do for you—or haven't done? And to think that I should take this trouble over you, knowing what you are! Do you despise me for it?

CAPT. G. (*Wiping his mouth to hide a smile.*) *Again?* It's entirely a work of charity on your part.

MRS. H. Ahhh! But I have no right to resent it.—Is she better-looking than I? Who was it said——?

CAPT. G. No—not that!

MRS. H. I'll be more merciful than you were. Don't you know that all women are alike?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Then this is the exception that proves the rule.

MRS. H. *All* of them! I'll tell you anything you like. I will, upon my word! They only want the admiration—from anybody—no matter who—anybody! But there is always *one* man that they care for more than any one else in the world, and would sacrifice all the others to. Oh, *do* listen! I've kept the Vaynor man trotting after

me like a poodle, and he believes that he is the only man I am interested in. I'll tell you what he said to me.

CAPT. G. Spare him. (*Aside.*) I wonder what *his* version is.

MRS. H. He's been waiting for me to look at him all through dinner. Shall I do it, and you can see what an idiot he looks?

CAPT. G. "But what imports the nomination of this gentleman?"

MRS. H. Watch! (*Sends a glance to the Vaynor man, who tries vainly to combine a mouthful of ice pudding, a smirk of self-satisfaction, a glare of intense devotion, and the stolidity of a British dining countenance.*)

CAPT. G. (*Critically.*) He doesn't look pretty. Why didn't you wait till the spoon was out of his mouth?

MRS. H. To amuse you. She'll make an exhibition of you as I've made of him; and people will laugh at you. Oh, Pip, can't you *see* that? It's as plain as the noonday sun. You'll be trotted about and told lies, and made a fool of like the others. *I* never made a fool of you, did I?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) What a clever little woman it is!

MRS. H. Well, what have you to say?

CAPT. G. I feel better.

MRS. H. Yes, I suppose so, after I have come down to your level. I couldn't have done it if I

hadn't cared for you so much. I have spoken the truth.

CAPT. G. It doesn't alter the situation.

MRS. H. (*Passionately.*) Then she *has* said that she cares for you! Don't believe her, Pip. It's a lie — as bad as yours to me!

CAPT. G. Ssssteady! I've a notion that a friend of yours is looking at you.

MRS. H. He! I *hate* him. He introduced you to me.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) And some people would like women to assist in making the laws. Introduction to imply condonement. (*Aloud.*) Well, you see, if you can remember so far back as that, I couldn't, in common politeness, refuse the offer.

MRS. H. In common politeness! We have got beyond *that!*

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Old ground means fresh trouble. (*Aloud.*) On my honour ——

MRS. H. Your *what?* Ha, ha!

CAPT. G. Dishonour, then. She's not what you imagine. I meant to ——

MRS. H. Don't tell me anything about her! She *won't* care for you, and when you come back, after having made an exhibition of yourself, you'll find me occupied with ——

CAPT G. (*Insolently.*) You couldn't while I am alive. (*Aside.*) If that doesn't bring her pride to her rescue, nothing will.

MRS. H. (*Drawing herself up.*) Couldn't do it? *I?* (*Softening.*) You're right. I don't believe I could — though you are what you are — a coward and a liar in grain.

CAPT. G. It doesn't hurt so much after your little lecture — with demonstrations.

MRS. H. One mass of vanity! Will nothing *ever* touch you in this life? There must be a Hereafter if it's only for the benefit of — But you will have it all to yourself.

CAPT. G. (*Under his eyebrows.*) Are you so certain of that?

MRS. H. I shall have had mine in this life; and it will serve me right.

CAPT. G. But the admiration that you insisted on so strongly a moment ago? (*Aside.*) Oh, I *am* a brute!

MRS. H. (*Fiercely.*) Will *that* console me for knowing that you will go to her with the same words, the same arguments, and the — the same pet names you used to me? And if she cares for you, you two will laugh over my story. Won't that be punishment heavy enough even for me — even for me? — And it's all useless. That's another punishment.

CAPT. G. (*Feebly.*) Oh, come! I'm not so low as you think.

MRS. H. Not now, perhaps, but you will be. Oh, Pip, if a woman flatters your vanity, there's

nothing on earth that you would not tell her; and no meanness that you would not do. Have I known you so long without knowing that?

CAPT. G. If you can trust me in nothing else — and I don't see why I should be trusted — you can count upon my holding my tongue.

MRS. H. If you denied everything you've said this evening and declared it was all in fun (*a long pause*), I'd trust you. Not otherwise. All I ask is, don't tell her my name. *Please* don't. A man might forget: a woman never would. (*Looks up table and sees hostess beginning to collect eyes.*) So it's all ended, through no fault of mine — Haven't I behaved beautifully? I've accepted your dismissal, and you managed it as cruelly as you could, and I have made you respect my sex, haven't I? (*Arranging gloves and fan.*) I only pray that she'll know you some day as I know you now. I wouldn't be you then, for I think even your conceit will be hurt. I hope she'll pay you back the humiliation you've brought on me. I hope — No. I don't. I *can't* give you up! I must have something to look forward to or I shall go crazy. When it's all over, come back to me, come back to me, and you'll find that you're my Pip still!

CAPT. G. (*Very clearly.*) 'False move, and you pay for it. It's a girl!

MRS. H. (*Rising.*) Then it *was* true! They said — but I wouldn't insult you by asking. A

girl! *I* was a girl not very long ago. Be good to her, Pip. I daresay she believes in you.

Goes out with an uncertain smile. He watches her through the door, and settles into a chair as the men redistribute themselves.

Capt. G. Now, if there is any Power who looks after this world, will He kindly tell me what I have done? (*Reaching out for the claret, and half aloud.*) What *have* I done?

WITH ANY AMAZEMENT

And are not afraid with any amazement.—*Marriage Service.*

SCENE.— *A bachelor's bed-room — toilet-table arranged with unnatural neatness.* CAPTAIN GADSBY *asleep and snoring heavily. Time,* 10.30 A. M.— *a glorious autumn day at Simla. Enter delicately* CAPTAIN MAFFLIN *of* GADSBY'S *regiment. Looks at sleeper, and shakes his head murmuring, "Poor Gaddy." Performs violent fantasia with hair-brushes on chair-back.*

CAPT. M. Wake up, my sleeping beauty! (*Roars.*)

"Uprouse yė, then, my merry merry men!
It is our opening day!
It is our opening da-ay!"

Gaddy, the little dicky-birds have been billing and cooing for ever so long, and *I'm* here!

CAPT. G. (*Sitting up and yawning*). 'Mornin'. This is awf'ly good of you, old fellow. Most awf'ly good of you. 'Don't know what I should do without you. 'Pon my soul, I don't. 'Haven't slept a wink all night.

CAPT. M. I didn't get in till half-past eleven. 'Had a look at you then, and you seemed to be sleeping as soundly as a condemned criminal.

CAPT. G. Jack, if you want to make those disgustingly worn-out jokes, you'd better go away. (*With portentous gravity.*) It's the happiest day in my life.

CAPT. M. (*Chuckling grimly.*) Not by a very long chalk, my son. You're going through some of the most refined torture you've ever known. But be calm. *I* am with you. 'Shun! *Dress!*

CAPT. G. Eh! Wha-at?

CAPT. M. *Do* you suppose that you are your own master for the next twelve hours? If you *do*, of course —— (*Makes for the door.*)

CAPT. G. No! For Goodness' sake, old man, don't do that! You'll see me through, won't you? I've been mugging up that beastly drill, and can't remember a line of it.

CAPT. M. (*Overhauling* G.'s *uniform.*) Go and tub. Don't bother me. I'll give you ten minutes to dress in.

Interval, filled by the noise as of one splashing in the bath-room.

CAPT. G. (*Emerging from dressing-room.*) What time is it?

CAPT. M. Nearly eleven.

CAPT. G. Five hours more. O Lord!

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) 'First sign of funk, that. 'Wonder if it's going to spread. (*Aloud.*) Come along to breakfast.

CAPT. G. I can't eat anything. I don't want any breakfast.

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) So early! (*Aloud.*) Captain Gadsby, I *order* you to eat breakfast, and a dashed good breakfast, too. None of your bridal airs and graces with me.

Leads G. *downstairs, and stands over him while he eats two chops.*

CAPT. G. (*Who has looked at his watch thrice in the last five minutes.*) What time is it?

CAPT. M. Time to come for a walk. Light up.

CAPT. G. I haven't smoked for ten days, and I won't *now.* (*Takes cheroot which* M. *has cut for him, and blows smoke through his nose luxuriously.*) We aren't going down the Mall, are we?

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) They're all alike in these stages. (*Aloud.*) No, my Vestal. We're going along the quietest road we can find.

CAPT. G. Any chance of seeing Her?

CAPT. M. Innocent! No! Come along, and, if you want me for the final obsequies, don't cut my eye out with your stick.

CAPT. G. (*Spinning round.*) I say, isn't She the dearest creature that ever walked? What's the time? What comes after "wilt thou take this woman"?

CAPT. M. You go for the ring. R'clect it'll be on the top of my right-hand little finger, and just

be careful how you draw it off, because I shall have the Verger's fees somewhere in my glove.

CAPT. G. (*Walking forward hastily.*) D—— the Verger! Come along! It's past twelve and I haven't seen Her since yesterday evening. (*Spinning round again.*) She's an absolute angel, Jack, and She's a dashed deal too good for me. Look here, does She come up the aisle on my arm, or how?

CAPT. M. If I thought that there was the least chance of your remembering anything for two consecutive minutes, I'd tell you. Stop passaging about like that!

CAPT. G. (*Halting in the middle of the road.*) I say, Jack.

CAPT. M. Keep quiet for another ten minutes if you can, you lunatic; and *walk!*

The two tramp at five miles an hour for fifteen minutes.

CAPT. G. What's the time? How about that cursed wedding-cake and the slippers? They don't throw 'em about in church, do they?

CAPT. M. In-variably. The Padre leads off with his boots.

CAPT. G. Confound your silly soul! Don't make fun of me. I can't stand it, and I won't!

CAPT. M. (*Untroubled.*) So-ooo, old horse!

You'll have to sleep for a couple of hours this afternoon.

CAPT. G. (*Spinning round*) I'm *not* going to be treated like a dashed child. Understand that!

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) Nerves gone to fiddle-strings. What a day we're having! (*Tenderly putting his hand on* G.'s *shoulder.*) My David, how long have you known this Jonathan? Would I come up here to make a fool of you — after all these years?

CAPT. G. (*Penitently.*) I know, I know, Jack — but I'm as upset as I can be. Don't mind what I say. Just hear me run through the drill and see if I've got it all right:

"To have and to hold for better or worse, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, so help me God. Amen."

CAPT. M. (*Suffocating with suppressed laughter.*) Yes. That's about the gist of it. I'll prompt if you get into a hat.

CAPT. G. (*Earnestly.*) Yes, you'll stick by me, Jack, won't you? I'm awf'ly happy, but I don't mind telling *you* that I'm in a blue funk!

CAPT. M. (*Gravely.*) Are you? I should never have noticed it. You don't *look* like it.

CAPT. G. Don't I? That's all right. (*Spinning round.*) On my soul and honour, Jack, She's the sweetest little angel that ever came down from

the sky. There isn't a woman on earth fit to speak to Her.

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) And this is old Gaddy! (*Aloud.*) Go on if it relieves you.

CAPT. G. You can laugh! That's all you wild asses of bachelors are fit for.

CAPT. M. (*Drawling.*) You never *would* wait for the troop to come up. You aren't quite married yet, y'know.

CAPT. G. Ugh! That reminds me. I don't believe I shall be able to get into my boots. Let's go home and try 'em on! (*Hurries forward.*)

CAPT. M. 'Wouldn't be in *your* shoes for anything that Asia has to offer.

CAPT. G. (*Spinning round.*) That just shows your hideous blackness of soul — your dense stupidity — your brutal narrow-mindedness. There's only one fault about you. You're the best of good fellows, and I don't know what I should have done without you, but — you aren't married. (*Wags his head gravely.*) Take a wife, Jack.

CAPT. M. (*With a face like a wall.*) Ya-as. Whose for choice?

CAPT. G. If you're going to be a blackguard, I'm going on — What's the time?

CAPT. M. (*Hums.*) —

"An' since 'twas very clear we drank only ginger-beer,
Faith, there must ha' been some stingo in the ginger."

Come back, you maniac. I'm going to take you home, and you're going to lie down.

CAPT. G. What on earth do I want to lie down for?

CAPT. M. Give me a light from your cheroot and see.

CAPT. G. (*Watching cheroot-butt quiver like a tuning-fork.*) Sweet state I'm in!

CAPT. M. You are. I'll get you a peg and you'll go to sleep.

They return and M. *compounds a four-finger peg.*

CAPT. G. Oh, *hus! hus!* It'll make me as drunk as an owl.

CAPT. M. 'Curious thing, 'twon't have the slightest effect on you. Drink it off, chuck yourself down there, and go to bye-bye.

CAPT. G. It's absurd. I sha'n't sleep. I *know* I sha'n't!

Falls into heavy doze at end of seven minutes. CAPT. M. *watches him tenderly.*

CAPT. M. Poor old Gaddy! I've seen a few turned off before, but never one who went to the gallows in this condition. 'Can't tell how it affects 'em, though. It's the thoroughbreds that sweat when they're backed into double-harness.—And that's the man who went through the guns at Amdheran like a devil possessed of devils. (*Leans*

over G.) But this is worse than the guns, old pal — worse than the guns, isn't it? (G. *turns in his sleep, and* M. *touches him clumsily on the forehead.*) Poor, dear old Gaddy! Going like the rest of 'em — going like the rest of 'em — Friend that sticketh closer than a brother — eight years. Dashed bit of a slip of a girl — eight weeks! And — where's your friend? (*Smokes disconsolately till church clock strikes three.*)

CAPT. M. Up with you! Get into your kit.

CAPT. G. Already? Isn't it too soon? Hadn't I better have a shave?

CAPT. M. *No!* You're all right. (*Aside.*) He'd chip his chin to pieces.

CAPT. G. What's the hurry?

CAPT. M. You've got to be there first.

CAPT. G. To be stared at?

CAPT. M. Exactly. You're part of the show. Where's the burnisher? Your spurs are in a shameful state.

CAPT. G. (*Gruffly.*) Jack, I be damned if you shall do that for me.

CAPT. M. (*More gruffly.*) Dry up and get dressed! If I choose to clean your spurs, you're under *my* orders.

CAPT. G. *dresses.* M. *follows suit.*

CAPT. M. (*Critically, walking round.*) M'yes, you'll do. Only don't look so like a criminal.

Ring, gloves, fees — that's all right for me. Let your moustache alone. Now, if the ponies are ready, we'll go.

CAPT. G. (*Nervously.*) It's much too soon. Let's light up! Let's have a peg! Let's ——

CAPT. M. Let's make bally asses of ourselves!

BELLS. (*Without.*) —

"Good — peo — ple — all
To prayers — we call."

CAPT. M. There go the bells! Come on — unless you'd rather not. (*They ride off.*)

BELLS.

"We honour the King
And Brides joy do bring —
Good tidings we tell,
And ring the Dead's knell."

CAPT. G. (*Dismounting at the door of the Church.*) I say, aren't we much too soon? There are no end of people inside. I say, aren't we much too late? Stick by me, Jack! What the devil do I do?

CAPT. M. Strike an attitude at the head of the aisle and wait for Her. (G. *groans as* M. *wheels him into position before three hundred eyes.*)

CAPT. M. (*Imploringly.*) Gaddy, if you love me, for pity's sake, for the Honour of the Regiment, stand up! Chuck yourself into your uniform!

Look like a man! I've got to speak to the Padre a minute. (G. *breaks into a gentle perspiration.*) If you wipe your face I'll *never* be your best man again. Stand *up!* (G. *trembles visibly.*)

CAPT. M. (*Returning.*) She's coming now. Look out when the music starts. There's the organ beginning to clack.

Bride steps out of 'rickshaw at Church door. G. catches a glimpse of her and takes heart.

ORGAN. —

"The Voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest marriage day,
The primal marriage-blessing,
It hath not passed away."

CAPT. M. (*Watching* G.) By Jove! He *is* looking well. 'Didn't think he had it in him.

CAPT. G. How long does this hymn go on for?

CAPT. M. It will be over directly. (*Anxiously.*) Beginning to bleach and gulp? Hold on, Gaddy, and think o' the Regiment.

CAPT. G. (*Measuredly.*) I say, there's a big brown lizard crawling up that wall.

CAPT. M. My Sainted Mother! The last stage of collapse!

Bride comes up to left of altar, lifts her eyes once to G., *who is suddenly smitten mad.*

CAPT. G. (*To himself again and again.*) Little

Featherweight's a woman — a woman! And I thought she was a little girl.

CAPT. M. (*In a whisper.*) From the halt — inward *wheel.*

CAPT. G. *obeys mechanically and the ceremony proceeds.*

PADRE. . . . only unto her as long as ye both shall live?

CAPT. G. (*His throat useless.*) Ha — hmmm!

CAPT. M. Say you will or you won't. There's no second deal here.

Bride gives response with perfect coolness, and is given away by the father.

CAPT. G. (*Thinking to show his learning.*) Jack, give me away now, *quick!*

CAPT. M. You've given yourself away quite enough. Her *right* hand, man! Repeat! Repeat! "Theodore Philip." Have you forgotten your own name?

CAPT. G. *stumbles through Affirmation, which Bride repeats without a tremor.*

CAPT. M. Now the ring! Follow the Padre! Don't pull off my glove! Here it is! Great Cupid, he's found his voice!

G. *repeats Troth in a voice to be heard to the end of the Church and turns on his heel.*

CAPT. M. (*Desperately.*) Rein back! Back to your troop! 'Tisn't half legal yet.

PADRE. . . . joined together let no man put asunder.

CAPT. G. *paralysed with fear jibs after Blessing.*

CAPT. M. (*Quickly.*) On your own front — one length. Take her with you. I don't come. You've nothing to say. (CAPT. G. *jingles up to altar.*)

CAPT. M. (*In a piercing rattle meant to be a whisper.*) Kneel, you stiff-necked ruffian! Kneel!

PADRE. . . . whose daughters are ye so long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement.

CAPT. M. Dismiss! Break off! Left wheel!

All troop to vestry. They sign.

CAPT. M. Kiss her, Gaddy.

CAPT. G. (*Rubbing the ink into his glove.*) Eh! Wha — at?

CAPT. M. (*Taking one pace to Bride.*) If you don't, I shall.

CAPT. G. (*Interposing an arm.*) Not this journey!

General kissing, in which CAPT. G. *is pursued by unknown female.*

CAPT. G. (*Faintly to* M.) This is Hades! Can I wipe my face now?

CAPT. M. My responsibility has ended. Better ask *Missis* Gadsby.

CAPT. G. *winces as though shot, and procession is Mendelssohned out of Church to house, where usual tortures take place over the wedding-cake.*

CAPT. M. (*At table.*) Up with you, Gaddy. They expect a speech.

CAPT. G. (*After three minutes' agony.*) Ha—hmmm. (*Thunders of applause.*)

CAPT. M. Doocid good, for a first attempt. Now go and change your kit while Mamma is weeping over "the Missus." (CAPT. G. *disappears.* CAPT. M. *starts up, tearing his hair.*) It's not *half* legal. Where are the shoes? Get an *ayah.*

AYAH. Missie Captain Sahib done gone *band karo* all the *jutis.*

CAPT. M. (*Brandishing scabbarded sword.*) Woman, produce those shoes! Some one lend me a bread-knife. We mustn't crack Gaddy's head more than it is. (*Slices heel off white satin slipper and puts slipper up his sleeve.*) Where is the Bride? (*To the company at large.*) Be tender with that rice. It's a heathen custom. Give me the big bag.

. . . . . .

Bride slips out quietly into 'rickshaw and departs towards the sunset.

CAPT. M. (*In the open.*) Stole away, by Jove! So much the worse for Gaddy! Here he is. Now,

Gaddy, this'll be livelier than Amdheran! Where's your horse?

CAPT. G. (*Furiously, seeing that the women are out of earshot.*) Where the —— is my *Wife?*

CAPT. M. Half-way to Mahasu by this time. You'll have to ride like Young Lochinvar.

Horse comes round on his hind legs; refuses to let G. *handle him.*

CAPT. G. Oh, you will, will you? Get round, you brute — you hog — you beast! Get *round!*

Wrenches horse's head over, nearly breaking lower jaw; swings himself into saddle, and sends home both spurs in the midst of a spattering gale of Best Patna.

CAPT. M. For your life and your love — ride, Gaddy! — And God bless you!

Throws half a pound of rice at G., *who disappears, bowed forward on the saddle, in a cloud of sunlit dust.*

CAPT. M. I've lost old Gaddy. (*Lights cigarette and strolls off, singing absently*):—

"You may carve it on his tombstone, you may cut it on his card,
That a young man married is a young man marred!"

MISS DEERCOURT. (*From her horse.*) Really,

Captain Mafflin! You are more plain-spoken than polite!

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) They say marriage is like cholera. 'Wonder who'll be the next victim.

White satin slipper slides from his sleeve and falls at his feet. Left Wondering.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

And ye shall be as — Gods!

SCENE.— *Thymy grass-plot at back of the Mahasu dâk-bungalow, overlooking little wooded valley. On the left, glimpse of the Dead Forest of Fagoo; on the right, Simla Hills. In background, line of the Snows.* CAPTAIN GADSBY, *now three weeks a husband, is smoking the pipe of peace on a rug in the sunshine. Banjo and tobacco-pouch on rug. Overhead the Fagoo eagles.* MRS. G. *comes out of bungalow.*

MRS. G. My husband!

CAPT. G. (*Lazily, with intense enjoyment.*) Eh, wha-at? Say that again.

MRS. G. I've written to Mamma and told her that we shall be back on the 17th.

CAPT. G. Did you give her my love?

MRS. G. No, I kept all that for myself. (*Sitting down by his side.*) I thought you wouldn't mind.

CAPT. G. (*With mock sternness.*) I object awf'ly. How did you know that it was yours to keep?

MRS. G. I guessed, Phil.

CAPT. G. (*Rapturously.*) *Lit-tle* Featherweight!

MRS. G. I *won't* be called those sporting pet names, bad boy.

CAPT. G. You'll be called anything I choose. Has it ever occurred to you, Madam, that you are my Wife?

MRS. G. It has. I haven't ceased wondering at it yet.

CAPT. G. Nor I. It seems so strange; and yet, somehow, it doesn't. (*Confidently.*) You see, it could have been no one else.

MRS. G. (*Softly.*) No. No one else — for me or for you. It must have been *all* arranged from the beginning, Phil, tell me again what made you care for me.

CAPT. G. How could I help it? You were *you*, you know.

MRS. G. Did you ever want to help it? Speak the truth!

CAPT. G. (*A twinkle in his eye.*) I did, darling, just at the first. But only at the very first. (*Chuckles.*) I called you — stoop low and I'll whisper — "a little beast." Ho! Ho! Ho!

MRS. G. (*Taking him by the moustache and making him sit up.*) "A — little — beast!" Stop laughing over your crime! And yet you had the — the — awful cheek to propose to me!

CAPT. G. I'd changed my mind then. And you weren't a little beast any more.

MRS. G. Thank you, Sir! And when was I ever?

CAPT. G. *Never!* But that first day, when you

gave me tea in that peach-coloured muslin gown thing, you looked — you did indeed, dear — such an absurd little mite. And I didn't know what to say to you.

MRS. G. (*Twisting moustache.*) So you said "little beast." Upon my word, Sir! *I* called *you* a "Crrrreature," but I wish now I had called you something worse.

CAPT. G. (*Very meekly.*) I apologise, but you're hurting me awf'ly. (*Interlude.*) You're welcome to torture me again on those terms.

MRS. G. Oh, *why* did you let me do it?

CAPT. G. (*Looking across valley.*) No reason in particular, but — if it amused you or did you any good — you might — wipe those dear little boots of yours on me.

MRS. G. (*Stretching out her hands.*) Don't! Oh, don't! Philip, my King, *please* don't talk like that. It's how *I* feel. You're so much too good for me. So much too good!

CAPT. G. Me! I'm not fit to put my arm round you. (*Puts it round.*)

MRS. G. Yes, you are. But I — what have I ever done?

CAPT. G. Given me a wee bit of your heart, haven't you, my Queen?

MRS. G. *That's* nothing. Any one would do *that.* They cou — couldn't help it.

CAPT. G. Pussy, you'll make me horribly con-

ceited. Just when I was beginning to feel so humble, too.

MRS. G. Humble! I don't believe it's in your character.

CAPT. G. What do you know of my character, Impertinence?

MRS. G. Ah, but I shall, sha'n't I, Phil? I shall have time, in all the years and years to come, to know everything about you; and there will be no secrets between us.

CAPT. G. Little witch! I believe you know me thoroughly already.

MRS. G. I think I can guess. You're selfish?

CAPT. G. Yes.

MRS. G. Foolish?

CAPT. G. *Very.*

MRS. G. And a dear?

CAPT. G. That is as my lady pleases.

MRS. G. Then your lady *is* pleased. (*A pause.*) D'you know that we're two solemn, serious, grown-up people ——

CAPT. G. (*Tilting her straw hat over her eyes.*) You grown-up! Pooh! You're a baby.

MRS. G. And we're talking nonsense.

CAPT. G. Then let's go on talking nonsense. I rather like it. Pussy, I'll tell you a secret. Promise not to repeat?

MRS. G. Ye—es. Only to you.

CAPT. G. I love you.

MRS. G. Re-ally! For how long?

CAPT. G. For ever and ever.

MRS. G. That's a long time.

CAPT. G. 'Think so? It's the shortest *I* can do with.

MRS. G. You're getting quite clever.

CAPT. G. I'm talking to *you*.

MRS. G. Prettily turned. Hold up your stupid old head and I'll pay you for it!

CAPT. G. (*Affecting supreme contempt.*) Take it yourself if you want it.

MRS. G. I've a great mind to — and I will! (*Takes it and is repaid with interest.*)

CAPT. G. Little Featherweight, it's my opinion that we *are* a couple of idiots.

MRS. G. We're the only two sensible people in the world! Ask the eagle. He's coming by.

CAPT. G. Ah! I daresay he's seen a good many sensible people at Mahasu. They say that those birds live for ever so long.

MRS. G. How long?

CAPT. G. A hundred and twenty years.

MRS. G. A hundred and twenty years! O-oh! And in a hundred and twenty years where will these two sensible people be?

CAPT. G. What *does* it matter so long as we are together now?

MRS. G. (*Looking round the horizon.*) Yes. Only you and I — I and you — in the whole wide, wide

world until the end. (*Sees the line of the Snows.*) How big and quiet the hills look! D'you think they care for us?

CAPT. G. 'Can't say I've consulted 'em particularly. *I* care, and that's enough for me.

MRS. G. (*Drawing nearer to him.*) Yes, now — but afterwards. What's that little black blur on the Snows?

CAPT. G. A snowstorm, forty miles away. You'll see it move, as the wind carries it across the face of that spur, and then it will be all gone.

MRS. G. And then it will be all gone. (*Shivers.*)

CAPT. G. (*Anxiously.*) 'Not chilled, pet, are you? 'Better let me get your cloak.

MRS. G. No. Don't leave me, Phil. Stay here. I believe I am afraid. Oh, why are the hills so *horrid!* Phil, promise me, promise me that you'll *always* love me.

CAPT. G. What's the trouble, darling? I can't promise any more than I have; but I'll promise that again and again if you like.

MRS. G. (*Her head on his shoulder.*) *Say* it, then — say it! N-no — don't. The — the — eagles would laugh. (*Recovering.*) My husband, you've married a little goose.

CAPT. G. (*Very tenderly.*) Have I? I am content whatever she is, so long as she is mine.

MRS. G. (*Quickly.*) Because she is yours or because she is me mineself?

CAPT. G. Because she is both. (*Piteously.*) I'm not clever, dear, and I don't think I can make myself understood properly.

MRS. G. *I* understand. Pip, will you tell me something?

CAPT. G. Anything you like. (*Aside.*) I wonder what's coming now.

MRS. G. (*Haltingly, her eyes lowered.*) You told me once in the old days — centuries and centuries ago — that you had been engaged before. I didn't say anything — *then.*

CAPT. G. (*Innocently.*) Why not?

MRS. G. (*Raising her eyes to his.*) Because — because I was afraid of losing you, my heart. But now — tell about it — *please.*

CAPT. G. There's nothing to tell. I was awf'ly old then — nearly two and twenty — and she was *quite* that.

MRS. G. That means she was older than you. I shouldn't like her to have been younger. Well?

CAPT. G. Well, I fancied myself in love and raved about a bit, and — oh, yes, by Jove! I made up poetry. Ha! Ha!

MRS. G. You never wrote any for *me!* What happened?

CAPT. G. I came out here, and the whole thing went *phut.* She wrote to say that there had been a mistake, and then she married.

MRS. G. Did she care for you much?

CAPT. G. No. At least she didn't show it as far as I remember.

MRS. G. As far as you remember! Do you remember her name? (*Hears it and bows her head.*) Thank you, my husband.

CAPT. G. Who but you had the right? Now, Little Featherweight, have you ever been mixed up in any dark and dismal tragedy?

MRS. G. If you call me Mrs. Gadsby, p'raps I'll tell.

CAPT. G. (*Throwing Parade rasp into his voice.*) Mrs. Gadsby, confess!

MRS. G. Good Heavens, Phil! I never knew that you could speak in that terrible voice.

CAPT. G. You don't know half my accomplishments yet. Wait till we are settled in the Plains, and I'll show you how I bark at my troop. You were going to say, darling?

MRS. G. I — I don't like to, after that voice. (*Tremulously.*) Phil, never you *dare* to speak to me in that tone, whatever I may do.

CAPT. G. My poor little love! Why, you're shaking all over. I *am* so sorry. Of course I never meant to upset you. Don't tell me anything. I'm a brute.

MRS. G. No, you aren't, and I *will* tell — There was a man.

CAPT. G. (*Lightly.*) Was there? Lucky man!

MRS. G. (*In a whisper.*) And I thought I cared for him.

CAPT. G. Still luckier man! Well?

MRS. G. And I thought I cared for him—and I didn't—and then you came—and I cared for you very, *very* much indeed. That's all. (*Face hidden.*) You aren't angry, are you?

CAPT. G. Angry? Not in the least. (*Aside.*) Good Lord, what have I done to deserve this angel?

MRS. G. (*Aside.*) And he never asked for the name! How funny men are! But perhaps it's as well.

CAPT. G. That man will go to heaven because you once thought you cared for him. 'Wonder if you'll ever drag me up there?

MRS. G. (*Firmly.*) 'Sha'n't go if you don't.

CAPT. G. Thanks. I say, Pussy, I don't know much about your religious beliefs. You were brought up to believe in a heaven and all that, weren't you?

MRS. G. Yes. But it was a pincushion heaven, with hymn-books in all the pews.

CAPT. G. (*Wagging his head with intense conviction.*) Never mind. There is a *pukka* heaven.

MRS. G. Where do you bring that message from, my prophet?

CAPT. G. Here! Because we care for each other. So it's all right.

MRS. G. (*As a troop of langurs crash through the branches.*) So it's all right. But Darwin says that we came from *those!*

CAPT. G. (*Placidly.*) Ah! Darwin was never in love with an angel. That settles it. Sstt, you brutes! Monkeys, indeed! You shouldn't read those books.

MRS. G. (*Folding her hands.*) If it pleases my Lord the King to issue proclamation.

CAPT. G. Don't, dear one. There are no orders between us. Only I'd *rather* you didn't. They lead to nothing, and bother people's heads.

MRS. G. Like your first engagement.

CAPT. G. (*With an immense calm.*) That was a necessary evil and led to you. Are *you* nothing?

MRS. G. Not so very much, am I?

CAPT. G. All this world and the next to me.

MRS. G. (*Very softly.*) My boy of boys! Shall I tell *you* something?

CAPT. G. Yes, if it's not dreadful — about other men.

MRS. G. It's about my own bad little self.

CAPT. G. Then it must be good. Go on, dear.

MRS. G. (*Slowly.*) I don't know why I'm telling you, Pip; but if ever you marry again — (*Interlude.*) Take your hand from my mouth or I'll *bite!* In the future, then remember — I don't know quite how to put it!

CAPT. G. (*Snorting indignantly.*) Don't try. "Marry again," indeed!

MRS. G. I must. Listen, my husband. Never, never, *never* tell your wife anything that you do not wish her to remember and think over all her life. Because a woman — yes, I *am* a woman — *can't* forget.

CAPT. G. By Jove, how do *you* know that?

MRS. G. (*Confusedly.*) I don't. I'm only guessing. I am — I was — a silly little girl; but I feel that I know so much, oh, so very much more than you, dearest. To begin with, I'm your wife.

CAPT. G. So I have been led to believe.

MRS. G. And I shall want to know every one of your secrets — to share everything you know with you. (*Stares round desperately.*)

CAPT. G. So you shall, dear, so you shall — but don't look like that.

MRS. G. For your own sake, don't stop me, Phil. I shall never talk to you in this way again. You must *not* tell me! At least, not now. Later on, when I'm an old matron, it won't matter; but if you love me, be very good to me now, for this part of my life I shall *never* forget! Have I made you understand?

CAPT. G. I think so, child. Have I said anything yet that you disapprove of?

MRS. G. Will you be *very* angry? That — that

voice, and what you said about the engagement ——

CAPT. G. But you *asked* to be told that, darling.

MRS. G. And *that's* why you shouldn't have told me! You must be the judge, and, oh, Pip, dearly as I love you, I sha'n't be able to help you! I shall hinder you, and you must judge in spite of me!

CAPT. G. (*Meditatively.*) We have a great many things to find out together, God help us both — say so, Pussy — but we shall understand each other better every day; and I think I'm beginning to see now. How in the world did you come to know just the importance of giving me just that lead?

MRS. G. I've told you that I *don't* know. Only somehow it seemed that, in all this new life, I was being guided for your sake as well as my own.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Then Mafflin was right! They know, and we — we're blind — all of us. (*Lightly.*) 'Getting a little beyond our depth. dear, aren't we? I'll remember, and, if I fail, let me be punished as I deserve.

MRS. G. There shall be no punishment. We'll start into life together from here — you and I — and no one else.

CAPT. G. And no one else. (*A pause.*) Your eyelashes are all wet, Sweet? Was there ever such a quaint little Absurdity?

MRS. G. Was there ever such nonsense talked before?

CAPT. G. (*Knocking the ashes out of his pipe.*) 'Tisn't what we say, it's what we don't say, that helps. And it's all the profoundest philosophy. But no one would understand — even if it were put into a book.

MRS. G. The idea! No — only we ourselves, or people like ourselves — if there are any people like us.

CAPT. G. (*Magisterially.*) All people not like ourselves are blind idiots.

MRS. G. (*Wiping her eyes.*) Do you think, then, that there are any people as happy as we are?

CAPT. G. 'Must be — unless we've appropriated all the happiness in the world.

MRS. G. (*Looking towards Simla.*) Poor dears! Just fancy if we have!

CAPT. G. Then we'll hang on to the whole show, for it's a great deal too jolly to lose — eh, wife o' mine?

MRS. G. O Pip! Pip! How much of you is a solemn, married man and how much a horrid, slangy school-boy?

CAPT. G. When you tell me how much of you was eighteen last birthday and how much is as old as the Sphinx and twice as mysterious, perhaps I'll attend to you. Lend me that banjo. The spirit moveth me to yowl at the sunset.

MRS. G. Mind! It's not tuned. Ah! How that jars!

CAPT. G. (*Turning pegs.*) It's amazingly difficult to keep a banjo to proper pitch.

MRS. G. It's the same with all musical instruments. What shall it be?

CAPT. G. "Vanity," and let the hills hear. (*Sings through the first and half of the second verse. Turning to* MRS. G.) Now, chorus! Sing, Pussy!

BOTH TOGETHER. (*Con brio, to the horror of the monkeys who are settling for the night.*)—

"Vanity, all is Vanity," said Wisdom, scorning me—
I clasped my true Love's tender hand and answered frank
and free—ee:—
"If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wi—ise?
(*Crescendo.*) Vanity let it be!"

MRS. G. (*Defiantly to the gray of the evening sky.*) "Vanity let it be!"

ECHO. (*From the Fagoo spur.*) Let it be!

FATIMA

And you may go into every room of the house and see every thing that is there, but into the Blue Room you must *not* go.— *The Story of Blue Beard.*

SCENE.— *The* GADSBYS' *bungalow in the Plains. Time,* 11 A. M. *on a Sunday morning.* CAPTAIN GADSBY, *in his shirt-sleeves, is bending over a complete set of Hussar's equipment, from saddle to picketing-rope, which is neatly spread over the floor of his study. He is smoking an unclean Brier, and his forehead is puckered with thought.*

CAPT. G. (*To himself, fingering a headstall.*) Jack's an ass. There's enough brass on this to load a mule — and, if the Americans know anything about anything, it can be cut down to a bit only. 'Don't want the watering-bridle, either. Humbug! — Half a dozen sets of chains and pulleys for one horse! Rot! (*Scratching his head.*) Now, let's consider it all over from the beginning. By Jove, I've forgotten the scale of weights! Ne'er mind. 'Keep the bit only, and eliminate every boss from the crupper to breastplate. No breastplate at all. Simple leather strap across the breast — like the Russians. Hi! Jack never thought of *that!*

MRS. G. (*Entering hastily, her hand bound in a cloth.*) Oh, Pip, I've scalded my hand over that horrid, horrid Tiparee jam!

CAPT. G. (*Absently.*) Eh! Wha-at?

MRS. G. (*With round-eyed reproach.*) I've scalded it *aw*-fully! Aren't you sorry? And I *did* so want that jam to jam properly.

CAPT. G. Poor little woman! Let me kiss the place and make it well. (*Unrolling bandage.*) You small sinner! Where's that scald! I can't see it.

MRS. G. On the top of the little finger. There! — It's a most 'normous big burn!

CAPT. G. (*Kissing little finger.*) Baby! Let Hyder look after the jam. You know I don't care for sweets.

MRS. G. In-deed? — Pip!

CAPT. G. Not of that kind, anyhow. And now run along, Minnie, and leave me to my own base devices. I'm busy.

MRS. G. (*Calmly settling herself in long chair.*) So I see. What a mess you're making! Why have you brought all that smelly leather stuff into the house?

CAPT. G. To play with. Do you mind, dear?

MRS. G. Let *me* play too. I'd like it.

CAPT. G. I'm afraid you wouldn't, Pussy — Don't you think that jam will burn, or whatever it is that jam does when it's not looked after by a clever little housekeeper?

MRS. G. I thought you said Hyder could attend to it. I left him in the verandah, stirring — when I hurt myself so.

CAPT. G. (*His eye returning to the equipment.*) Po-oor little woman! — Three pounds four and seven is three eleven, and that can be cut down to two eight, with just a *lee*-tle care, without weakening anything. Farriery is all rot in incompetent hands. What's the use of a shoe-case when a man's scouting? He can't stick it on with a lick —like a stamp—the shoe! Skittles!

MRS. G. What's skittles? Pah! What *is* this leather cleaned with?

CAPT. G. Cream and champagne and — Look here, dear, do you really want to talk to me about anything important?

MRS. G. No. I've done my accounts, and I thought I'd like to see what you're doing.

CAPT. G. Well, love, now you've seen and — Would you mind? — That is to say — Minnie, I really *am* busy.

MRS. G. You want me to go?

CAPT. G. Yes, dear, for a little while. This tobacco will hang in your dress, and saddlery doesn't interest you.

MRS. G. Everything you do interests me, Pip.

CAPT. G. Yes, I know, I know, dear. I'll tell you all about it some day when I've put a head on this thing. In the meantime ——

MRS. G. I'm to be turned out of the room like a troublesome child?

CAPT. G. No-o. I don't mean that exactly. But, you see, I shall be tramping up and down, shifting these things to and fro, and I shall be in your way. Don't you think so?

MRS. G. Can't I lift them about? Let me try. (*Reaches forward to trooper's saddle.*)

CAPT. G. Good gracious, child, don't touch it. You'll hurt yourself. (*Picking up saddle.*) Little girls aren't expected to handle *numdahs*. Now, where would you like it put? (*Holds saddle above his head.*)

MRS. G. (*A break in her voice.*) Nowhere. Pip, how good you are — and how strong! Oh, what's that ugly red streak inside your arm?

CAPT. G. (*Lowering saddle quickly.*) Nothing. It's a mark of sorts. (*Aside.*) And Jack's coming to tiffin with *his* notions all cut and dried!

MRS. G. I know it's a mark, but I've never seen it before. It runs all up the arm. What is it?

CAPT. G. A cut — if you want to know.

MRS. G. Want to know! Of course I do! I can't have my husband cut to pieces in this way. How did it come? Was it an accident? Tell me, Pip.

CAPT. G. (*Grimly.*) No. 'Twasn't an accident. I got it — from a man — in Afghanistan.

Mrs. G. In action? Oh, Pip, and you *never* told me!

Capt. G. I'd forgotten all about it.

Mrs. G. Hold up your arm! What a horrid, ugly scar! Are you sure it doesn't hurt now? How did the man give it you?

Capt. G. (*Desperately looking at his watch.*) With a knife. I came down — old Van Loo did, that's to say — and fell on my leg, so I couldn't run. And then this man came up and began chopping at me as I sprawled.

Mrs. G. Oh, don't, don't! That's enough! — Well, what happened?

Capt. G. I couldn't get to my holster, and Mafflin came round the corner and stopped the performance.

Mrs. G. How? He's such a lazy man. I don't believe he did.

Capt. G. Don't you? I don't think the man had much doubt about it. Jack cut his head off.

Mrs. G. Cut — his — head — off! "With one blow," as they say in the books?

Capt. G. I'm not sure. I was too interested in myself to know much about it. Anyhow, the head was off, and Jack was punching old Van Loo in the ribs to make him get up. Now you know all about it, dear, and now ——

Mrs G. You want me to go, of course. You

never told me about this, though I've been married to you for *ever* so long; and you never *would* have told me if I hadn't found out; and you never *do* tell me anything about yourself, or what you do, or what you take an interest in.

CAPT. G. Darling, I'm always with you, aren't I?

MRS. G. Always in my pocket, you were going to say. I know you are; but you are always *thinking* away from me.

CAPT. G. (*Trying to hide a smile.*) Am I? I wasn't aware of it. I'm awf'ly sorry.

MRS. G. (*Piteously.*) Oh, don't make fun of me! Pip, you know what I mean. When you are reading one of those things about Cavalry, by that idiotic Prince — why doesn't he *be* a Prince instead of a stable-boy?

CAPT. G. Prince Kraft a stable-boy — Oh, my Aunt! Never mind, dear. You were going to say?

MRS. G. It doesn't matter; you don't care for what I say. Only — only you get up and walk about the room, staring in front of you, and then Mafflin comes in to dinner, and after I'm in the drawing-room I can hear you and him talking, and talking, and talking, about things I can't understand, and — oh, I get *so* tired and feel *so* lonely! — I don't want to complain and be a trouble, Pip; but I do — indeed I do!

CAPT. G. My poor darling! I never thought

or that. Why don't you ask some nice people in to dinner?

MRS. G. Nice people! Where am I to find them? Horrid frumps! And if I *did*, I shouldn't be amused. You know I only want *you*.

CAPT. G. And you have me surely, Sweetheart?

MRS. G. I have not! Pip, why don't you take me into your life?

CAPT. G. More than I do? That would be difficult, dear.

MRS. G. Yes, I suppose it would — to you. I'm no help to you — no companion to you; and you like to have it so.

CAPT. G. Aren't you a little unreasonable, Pussy?

MRS. G. (*Stamping her foot.*) I'm the most reasonable woman in the world — when I'm treated properly.

CAPT. G. And since when have I been treating you improperly?

MRS. G. Always — and since the beginning. You *know* you have.

CAPT. G. I don't; but I'm willing to be convinced.

MRS. G. (*Pointing to saddlery.*) There!

CAPT. G. How do you mean?

MRS. G. What does all *that* mean? Why am I not to be told? Is it so precious?

CAPT. G. I forget its exact Government value

just at present. It means that it is a great deal too heavy.

Mrs. G. Then why do you touch it?

Capt. G. To make it lighter. See here, little love, I've one notion and Jack has another, but we are both agreed that all this equipment is about thirty pounds too heavy. The thing is how to cut it down without weakening any part of it, and, at the same time, allowing the trooper to carry everything he wants for his own comfort — socks and shirts and things of that kind.

Mrs. G. Why doesn't he pack them in a little trunk?

Capt. G. (*Kissing her.*) Oh, you darling! Pack them in a little trunk, indeed! Hussars don't carry trunks, and it's a most important thing to make the horse do all the carrying.

Mrs. G. But why need *you* bother about it? You're not a trooper.

Capt. G. No; but I command a few score of him; and equipment is nearly everything in these days.

Mrs. G. More than *me?*

Capt. G. Stupid! Of course not; but it's a matter that I'm tremendously interested in, because if I or Jack, or I and Jack, work out some sort of lighter saddlery and all that, it's possible that we may get it adopted.

Mrs. G. How?

CAPT. G. Sanctioned at Home, where they will make a sealed pattern—a pattern that all the saddlers must copy—and so it will be used by all the regiments.

MRS. G. And that interests you?

CAPT. G. It's part of my profession, y'know, and my profession is a good deal to me. Everything in a soldier's equipment is important, and if we can improve that equipment, so much the better for the soldiers and for us.

MRS. G. Who's "us"?

CAPT. G. Jack and I; only Jack's notions are too radical. What's that big sigh for, Minnie?

MRS. G. Oh, nothing—and you've kept all this a secret from me! Why?

CAPT. G. Not a secret, exactly, dear. I didn't say anything about it to you because I didn't think it would amuse you.

MRS. G. And am I only made to be amused?

CAPT. G. No, of course. I merely mean that it couldn't interest you.

MRS. G. It's *your* work, and—and if you'd let me, I'd count all these things up. If they are too heavy, you know by how much they are too heavy, and you must have a list of things made out to your scale of lightness, and——

CAPT. G. I have got both scales somewhere in my head; but it's hard to tell how light you can

make a headstall, for instance, until you've actually had a model made.

MRS. G. But if you read out the list, I could copy it down, and pin it up there just above your table. Wouldn't that do?

CAPT. G. It would be awf'ly nice, dear, but it would be giving you trouble for nothing. I can't work that way. I go by rule of thumb. I know the present scale of weights, and the other one — the one that I'm trying to work to — will shift and vary so much that I couldn't be certain, even if I wrote it down.

MRS. G. I'm *so* sorry. I thought I might help. Is there anything else I could be of use in?

CAPT. G. (*Looking round the room.*) I can't think of anything. You're *always* helping me, you know.

MRS. G. Am I? How?

CAPT. G. You are you, of course, and as long as you're near me — I can't explain exactly, but it's in the air.

MRS. G. And that's why you wanted to send me away?

CAPT. G. That's only when I'm trying to do work — grubby work like this.

MRS. G. Mafflin's better, then, isn't he?

CAPT. G. (*Rashly.*) Of course he is. Jack and I have been thinking along the same groove for two or three years about this equipment. It's our hobby, and it may really be useful some day.

MRS. G. (*After a pause.*) And that's all that you have away from me?

CAPT. G. It isn't very far away from you now. Take care the oil on that bit doesn't come off on your dress.

MRS. G. I wish — I wish so much that I could really help you. I believe I could — if I left the room. But that's not what I mean.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Give me patience! I wish she would go. (*Aloud.*) I assure you you can't do anything for me, Minnie, and I must really settle down to this. Where's my pouch?

MRS. G. (*Crossing to writing-table.*) Here you are, Bear. What a mess you keep your table in!

CAPT. G. Don't touch it. There's a method in my madness, though you mightn't think of it.

MRS. G. (*At table.*) I want to look — Do you keep accounts, Pip?

CAPT. G. (*Bending over saddlery.*) Of a sort. Are you rummaging among the Troop papers? Be careful.

MRS. G. Why? I sha'n't disturb anything. Good gracious! I had no idea that you had anything to do with so many sick horses.

CAPT. G. 'Wish I hadn't, but they insist on falling sick. Minnie, if I were you I really should not investigate those papers. You may come across something that you won't like.

MRS. G. Why will you always treat me like a

child? I know I'm not displacing the horrid things.

CAPT. G. (*Resignedly.*) Very well, then. Don't blame me if anything happens. Play with the table and let me go on with the saddlery. (*Slipping hand into trousers-pocket.*) Oh, the deuce!

MRS. G. (*Her back to* G.) What's that for?

CAPT. G. Nothing. (*Aside.*) There's not much in it, but I wish I'd torn it up.

MRS. G. (*Turning over contents of table.*) I know you'll hate me for this; but I do want to see what your work is like. (*A pause.*) Pip, what are "farcy-buds"?

CAPT. G. Hah! Would you really like to know? They aren't pretty things.

MRS. G. This "Journal of Veterinary Science" says they are of "absorbing interest." Tell me.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) It may turn her attention.

Gives a long and designedly loathsome account of glanders and farcy.

MRS. G. Oh, that's enough. Don't go on!

CAPT. G. But you wanted to know — Then these things suppurate and matterate and spread ——

MRS. G. Pip, you're making me sick! You're a horrid, disgusting school-boy.

CAPT. G. (*On his knees among the bridles.*) You asked to be told. It's not my fault if you worry me into talking about horrors.

MRS. G. Why didn't you say — No?

CAPT. G. Good Heavens, child! Have you come in here simply to bully me?

MRS. G. I bully *you?* How could I? You're so strong. (*Hysterically.*) Strong enough to pick me up and put me outside the door and leave me there to cry. Aren't you?

CAPT. G. It seems to me that you're an irrational little baby. Are you quite well?

MRS. G. Do I look ill? (*Returning to table.*) Who is your lady friend with the big gray envelope and the fat monogram outside?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Then it wasn't locked up, confound it! (*Aloud.*) "God made her, therefore let her pass for a woman." You remember what farcy-buds are like?

MRS. G. (*Showing envelope.*) This has nothing to do with *them.* I'm going to open it. May I?

CAPT. G. Certainly, if you want to. I'd sooner you didn't, though. I don't ask to look at your letters to the Deercourt girl.

MRS. G. You'd *better* not, Sir! (*Takes letter from envelope.*) Now, may I look? If you say no, I shall cry.

CAPT. G. You've never cried in my knowledge of you, and I don't believe you could.

MRS. G. I feel very like it to-day, Pip. Don't be hard on me. (*Reads letter.*) It begins in the

middle, without any "Dear Captain Gadsby," or anything. How funny!

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) No, it's not Dear Captain Gadsby, or anything, now. How funny!

MRS. G. What a strange letter! (*Reads.*) "And so the moth has come too near the candle at last, and has been singed into — shall I say Respectability? I congratulate him, and hope he will be as happy as he deserves to be." What does that mean? Is she congratulating you about our marriage?

CAPT. G. Yes, I suppose so.

MRS. G. (*Still reading letter.*) She seems to be a particular friend of yours.

CAPT. G. Yes. She was an excellent matron of sorts — a Mrs. Herriott — wife of a Colonel Herriott. I used to know some of her people at Home long ago — before I came out.

MRS. G. Some Colonels' wives are young — as young as me. I knew one who was younger.

CAPT. G. Then it couldn't have been Mrs. Herriott. She was old enough to have been your mother, dear.

MRS. G. I remember now. Mrs. Scargill was talking about her at the Duffins' tennis, before you came for me, on Tuesday. Captain Mafflin said she was a "dear old woman." Do you know, I think Mafflin is a very clumsy man with his feet.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Good old Jack! (*Aloud.*) Why, dear?

MRS. G. He had put his cup down on the ground then, and he literally stepped into it. Some of the tea spirted over my dress — the gray one. I meant to tell you about it before.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) There are the makings of a strategist about Jack, though his methods are coarse. (*Aloud.*) You'd better get a new dress, then. (*Aside.*) Let us pray that that will turn her.

MRS. G. Oh, it isn't stained in the least. I only thought that I'd tell you. (*Returning to letter.*) *What* an extraordinary person! (*Reads.*) "But need I remind you that you have taken upon yourself a charge of wardship" — what in the world is a charge of wardship? — "which, as you yourself know, may end in Consequences ——"

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) It's safest to let 'em see everything as they come across it; but 'seems to me that there are exceptions to the rule. (*Aloud.*) I told you that there was nothing to be gained from rearranging my table.

MRS. G. (*Absently.*) What *does* the woman mean? She goes on talking about Consequences — "almost inevitable Consequences" with a capital C — for half a page. (*Flushing scarlet.*) Oh, good gracious! How abominable!

CAPT. G. (*Promptly.*) Do you think so?

Doesn't it show a sort of motherly interest in us? (*Aside.*) Thank Heaven, Harry always wrapped her meaning up safely! (*Aloud.*) *Is* it absolutely necessary to go on with the letter, darling?

Mrs. G. It's impertinent — it's simply horrid. What *right* has this woman to write in this way to you? She oughtn't to.

Capt. G. When you write to the Deercourt girl, I notice that you generally fill three or four sheets. Can't you let an old woman babble on paper once in a way? She means well.

Mrs. G. I don't care. She shouldn't write, and if she did, you ought to have shown me her letter.

Capt. G. Can't you understand why I kept it to myself, or must I explain at length — as I explained the farcy-buds?

Mrs. G. (*Furiously.*) Pip, I *hate* you! This is as bad as those idiotic saddle-bags on the floor. Never mind whether it would please me or not, you ought to have given it to me to read.

Capt. G. It comes to the same thing. You took it yourself.

Mrs. G. Yes, but if I hadn't taken it, you wouldn't have said a word. I think this Harriet Herriott — it's like a name in a book — is an interfering old Thing.

Capt. G. (*Aside.*) So long as you thoroughly understand that she *is* old, I don't much care what you think. (*Aloud.*) Very good, dear. Would

you like to write and tell her so? She's seven thousand miles away.

MRS. G. I don't want to have anything to do with her, but you ought to have told me. (*Turning to last page of letter.*) And she patronises *me*, too. *I've* never seen her! (*Reads.*) "I do not know how the world stands with you; in all human probability I shall never know; but whatever I may have said before, I pray for *her* sake more than for yours that all may be well. I have learnt what misery means, and I dare not wish that any one dear to you should share my knowledge."

CAPT. G. Good God! Can't you leave that letter alone, or, at least, can't you refrain from reading it aloud? I've been through it once. Put it back on the desk. Do you hear me?

MRS. G. (*Irresolutely.*) I sh—sha'n't! (*Looks at* G.'s *eyes.*) Oh, Pip, *please!* I didn't mean to make you angry—'Deed, I didn't. Pip, I'm so sorry. I know I've wasted your time——

CAPT. G. (*Grimly.*) You have. Now, will you be good enough to go—if there is nothing more in my room that you are anxious to pry into?

MRS. G. (*Putting out her hands.*) Oh, Pip, don't look at me like that! I've never seen you look like that before, and it hu-urts me! I'm sorry. I oughtn't to have been here at all, and—and—and—(*sobbing*). Oh, be good to me! Be good to me! There's only you—anywhere!

Breaks down in long chair, hiding face in cushions.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) She doesn't know how she flicked me on the raw. (*Aloud, bending over chair.*) I didn't mean to be harsh, dear — I didn't really. You can stay here as long as you please, and do what you please. Don't cry like that. You'll make yourself sick. (*Aside.*) What on earth has come over her? (*Aloud.*) Darling, what's the matter with you?

MRS. G. (*Her face still hidden.*) Let me go — let me go to my own room. Only — only say you aren't angry with me.

CAPT. G. Angry with *you*, love! Of course not. I was angry with myself. I'd lost my temper over the saddlery — Don't hide your face, Pussy. I want to kiss it.

Bends lower, MRS. G. *slides right arm round his neck. Several interludes and much sobbing.*

MRS. G. (*In a whisper.*) I didn't mean about the jam when I came in to tell you ——

CAPT. G. Bother the jam and the equipment! (*Interlude.*)

MRS. G. (*Still more faintly.*) My finger wasn't scalded at *all.* I — I wanted to speak to you about — about — something else, and — I didn't know how.

CAPT. G. Speak away, then. (*Looking into her*

eyes.) Eh! Wha—at? Minnie! Here, don't go away! You don't mean?

Mrs. G. (*Hysterically, backing to portière and hiding her face in its folds.*) The — the Almost Inevitable Consequences! (*Flits through portière as* G. *attempts to catch her, and bolts herself in her own room.*)

Capt. G. (*His arms full of portière.*) Oh! (*Sitting down heavily in chair.*) I'm a brute — a pig — a bully, and a blackguard. My poor, poor little darling! "Made to be amused only——?"

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Knowing Good and Evil.

SCENE.—*The* GADSBYS' *bungalow in the Plains, in June. Punkah-coolies asleep in verandah where* CAPTAIN GADSBY *is walking up and down.* DOCTOR'S *trap in porch.* JUNIOR CHAPLAIN *drifting generally and uneasily through the house. Time,* 3.40 A. M. *Heat* 94° *in verandah.*

DOCTOR. (*Coming into verandah and touching* G. *on the shoulder.*) You had better go in and see her now.

CAPT. G. (*The colour of good cigar-ash.*) Eh, wha-at? Oh, yes, of course. What did you say?

DOCTOR. (*Syllable by syllable.*) Go — in — to — the — room — and — see — her. She wants to speak to you. (*Aside, testily.*) I shall have *him* on my hands next.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (*In half-lighted dining-room.*) Isn't there any ——?

DOCTOR. (*Savagely.*) Hsh, you little fool!

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. Let me do my work. Gadsby, stop a minute! (*Edges after* G.)

DOCTOR. Wait till she sends for you at least — *at least.* Man alive, he'll kill you if you go in there! What are you bothering him for?

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (*Coming into verandah.*) I've given him a stiff brandy-peg. He wants it. You've forgotten him for the last ten hours and — forgotten yourself too.

G. *enters bedroom, which is lit by one night-lamp.* AYAH *on the floor pretending to be asleep.*

VOICE. (*From the bed.*) All down the street — *such* bonfires! *Ayah*, go and put them out! (*Appealingly.*) How can I sleep with an installation of the C. I. E. in my room? No — not C. I. E. Something else. *What* was it?

CAPT. G. (*Trying to control his voice.*) Minnie, I'm here. (*Bending over bed.*) Don't you know me, Minnie? It's me — it's Phil — it's your husband.

VOICE. (*Mechanically.*) It's me — it's Phil — it's your husband.

CAPT. G. She doesn't know me! — It's your own husband, darling.

VOICE. Your own husband, darling.

AYAH. (*With an inspiration.*) Memsahib understanding all *I* saying.

CAPT. G. Make her understand me, then — quick!

AYAH. (*Hand on* MRS. G.'s *forehead.*) Memsahib! Captain Sahib here.

VOICE. *Salaam do.* (*Fretfully.*) I know I'm not fit to be seen.

AYAH. (*Aside to* G.) Say "*marneen*" same as breakfash.

CAPT. G. Good-morning, little woman. How are we to-day?

VOICE. That's Phil. Poor old Phil. (*Viciously.*) Phil, you fool, I can't see you. Come nearer.

CAPT. G. Minnie! Minnie! It's me — you know me?

VOICE. (*Mockingly.*) Of course I do. Who does not know the man who was so cruel to his wife — almost the only one he ever had?

CAPT. G. Yes, dear. Yes — of course, of course. But won't you speak to him? He wants to speak to you so much.

VOICE. They'd never let him in. The Doctor would give *darwaza bund* even if he were in the house. He'll never come. (*Despairingly.*) O Judas! Judas! Judas!

CAPT. G. (*Putting out his arms.*) They have let him in, and he always was in the house. Oh, my love — don't you know me?

VOICE. (*In a half chant.*) "And it came to pass at the eleventh hour that this poor soul repented." It knocked at the gates, but they were shut — tight as a plaster — a great, burning plaster. They had pasted our marriage certificate all across the

door, and it was made of red-hot iron—people really ought to be more careful, you know.

CAPT. G. What *am* I to do? (*Takes her in his arms.*) Minnie! speak to me—to Phil.

VOICE. What shall I say? Oh, tell me what to say before it's too late! They are all going away and I can't say anything.

CAPT. G. Say you know me! Only say you know me!

DOCTOR. (*Who has entered quietly.*) For pity's sake don't take it too much to heart, Gadsby. It's this way sometimes. They won't recognise. They say all sorts of queer things—don't you *see?*

CAPT. G. All right! All right! Go away now; she'll recognise me; you're bothering her. She *must*—mustn't she?

DOCTOR. She will before— Have I your leave to try ——?

CAPT. G. Anything you please, so long as she'll know me. It's only a question of—hours, isn't it?

DOCTOR. (*Professionally.*) While there's life there's hope, y'know. But don't build on it.

CAPT. G. I don't. Pull her together if it's possible. (*Aside.*) What have I done to deserve this?

DOCTOR. (*Bending over bed.*) Now, Mrs. Gadsby! We shall be all right to-morrow. You *must* take it, or I sha'n't let Phil see you. It isn't nasty, is it?

VOICE. Medicines! *Always* more medicines! Can't you leave me alone?

CAPT. G. Oh, leave her in peace, Doc!

DOCTOR. (*Stepping back,—aside.*) May I be forgiven if I've done wrong. (*Aloud.*) In a few minutes she ought to be sensible; but I daren't tell you to look for anything. It's only ——

CAPT. G. What? Go *on*, man!

DOCTOR. (*In a whisper.*) Forcing the last rally.

CAPT. G. Then leave us alone.

DOCTOR. Don't mind what she says at first, if you can. They—they—they turn against those they love most sometimes in this.—It's hard, but ——

CAPT. G. Am I her husband or are you? Leave us alone for what time we have together.

VOICE. (*Confidentially.*) And we were engaged *quite* suddenly, Emma. I assure you that I never thought of it for a moment; but, oh, my little Me!—I don't know *what* I should have done if he *hadn't* proposed.

CAPT. G. She thinks of that Deercourt girl before she thinks of me. (*Aloud.*) Minnie!

VOICE. Not from the shops, Mummy dear. You can get the real leaves from Kaintu, and (*laughing weakly*) never mind about the blossoms —Dead white silk is only fit for widows, and I *won't* wear it. It's as bad as a winding-sheet. (*A long pause.*)

CAPT. G. I never asked a favour yet. If there is anybody to listen to me, let her know me — even if I die too!

VOICE. (*Very faintly.*) Pip, Pip dear.

CAPT. G. I'm here, darling.

VOICE. What has happened? They've been bothering me so with medicines and things, and they wouldn't let you come and see me. I was never ill before. Am I ill now?

CAPT. G. You — you aren't quite well.

VOICE. How funny! Have I been ill long?

CAPT. G. Some days; but you'll be all right in a little time.

VOICE. Do you think so, Pip? I don't feel well and — Oh! what *have* they done to my hair?

CAPT. G. I d-d-don't know.

VOICE. They've cut it off. What a shame!

CAPT. G. It must have been to make your head cooler.

VOICE. 'Just like a boy's wig. Don't I look horrid?

CAPT. G. Never looked prettier in your life, dear. (*Aside.*) How am I to ask her to say good-bye?

VOICE. I don't *feel* pretty. I feel very ill. My heart won't work. It's nearly dead inside me, and there's a funny feeling in my eyes. Everything seems the same distance — you and the almirah and the table — inside my eyes or miles away. What does it mean, Pip?

CAPT. G. You're a little feverish, Sweetheart — very feverish! (*Breaking down.*) My love! my love! How can I let you go?

VOICE. I thought so. Why didn't you tell me that at first?

CAPT. G. What?

VOICE. That I am going to — die.

CAPT. G. But you aren't. You sha'n't.

AYAH *to punkah-coolie.* (*Stepping into verandah after a glance at the bed.*) *Punkah chor do!* (Stop pulling the punkah.)

VOICE. It's hard, Pip. So very, *very* hard after one year — just one year. (*Wailing.*) And I'm only twenty. Most girls aren't even married at twenty. Can't they do *anything* to help me? I don't *want* to die.

CAPT. G. Hush, dear. You won't.

VOICE. What's the use of talking? *Help* me! You've never failed me yet. Oh, Phil, help me to keep alive. (*Feverishly.*) I don't believe you wish me to live. You weren't a bit sorry when that horrid baby thing died. I wish I'd killed it!

CAPT. G. (*Drawing his hand across his forehead.*) It's more than a man's meant to bear — it's not right. (*Aloud.*) Minnie, love, I'd die for you if it would help.

VOICE. No more death. There's enough already. Pip, don't *you* die too.

CAPT. G. I wish I dared.

VOICE. It says: "Till Death do us part." Nothing after that — and so it would be no use. It stops at the dying. *Why* does it stop there? Only such a very short life, too. Pip, I'm sorry we married.

CAPT. G. No! Anything but that, Min!

VOICE. Because you'll forget and I'll forget. Oh, Pip, *don't* forget! I always loved you, though I was cross sometimes. If I ever did anything that you didn't like, say you forgive me now.

CAPT. G. You never did, darling. On my soul and honour, you never did. I haven't a thing to forgive you.

VOICE. I sulked for a whole week about those petunias. (*With a laugh.*) What a little wretch I was, and how grieved you were! Forgive me that, Pip.

CAPT. G. There's nothing to forgive. It was my fault. They *were* too near the drive. For God's sake don't talk so, Minnie! There's such a lot to say, and so little time to say it in.

VOICE. Say that you'll always love me — until the end.

CAPT. G. Until the end. (*Carried away.*) It's a lie. It *must* be, because we've loved each other. This isn't the end.

VOICE. (*Relapsing into semi-delirium.*) *My* Church-service has an ivory cross on the back, and *it* says so, so it must be true. "Till Death do us part."

—But that's a lie. (*With a parody of* G.'s *manner*.) A damned lie! (*Recklessly*.) Yes, I can swear as well as Trooper Pip. I can't make my head think, though. That's because they cut off my hair. How *can* one think with one's head all fuzzy? (*Pleadingly*.) Hold me, Pip! Keep me with you always and always. (*Relapsing*.) But if you marry the Thorniss girl when I'm dead, I'll come back and howl under our bedroom window all night. Oh, bother! You'll think I'm a jackal. Pip, what time is it?

CAPT. G. A little before the dawn, dear.

VOICE. I wonder where I shall be this time to-morrow?

CAPT. G. Would you like to see the Padre?

VOICE. Why should I? He'd tell me that I am going to heaven; and that wouldn't be true, because you are here. Do you recollect when he upset the cream-ice all over his trousers at the Gassers' tennis?

CAPT. G. Yes, dear.

VOICE. I often wondered whether he got another pair of trousers; but then his are so shiny all over that you really couldn't tell unless you were told. Let's call him in and ask.

CAPT. G. (*Gravely*.) No. I don't think he'd like that. 'Your head comfy, Sweetheart?

VOICE. (*Faintly with a sigh of contentment*.) Yeth! Gracious, Pip, when *did* you shave last? Your

chin's worse than the barrel of a musical box.— No, don't lift it up. I like it. (*A pause.*) You said you've never cried at all. You're crying all over my cheek.

CAPT. G. I — I — I can't help it, dear.

VOICE. How funny! I couldn't cry now to save my life. (G. *shivers.*) *I* want to sing.

CAPT. G. Won't it tire you? 'Better not, perhaps.

VOICE. Why? I *won't* be bothered about. (*Begins in a hoarse quaver*): —

"Minnie bakes oaten cake, Minnie brews ale,
All because her Johnnie's coming home from the sea.

(That's parade, Pip.)

And she grows red as rose, who was so pale;
And 'Are you sure the church-clock goes?' says she."

(*Pettishly.*) I knew I couldn't take the last note. How do the bass chords run? (*Puts out her hands and begins playing piano on the sheet.*)

CAPT. G. (*Catching up hands.*) Ahh! Don't do that, Pussy, if you love me.

VOICE. Love you? Of course I do. Who else should it be? (*A pause.*)

VOICE. (*Very clearly.*) Pip, I'm going now. Something's choking me cruelly. (*Indistinctly.*) Into the dark — without you, my heart.— But it's a lie, dear — we mustn't believe it.— For ever and

ever, living or dead. Don't let me go, my husband — hold me tight.— They can't — whatever happens. (*A cough.*) Pip — *my* Pip! Not for always — and — so — soon! (*Voice ceases.*)

Pause of ten minutes. G. *buries his face in the side of the bed while* AYAH, *bends over bed from opposite side and feels* MRS. G.*'s breast and forehead.*

CAPT. G. (*Rising.*) *Doctor Sahib ko salaam do.*

AYAH. (*Still by bedside, with a shriek.*) Ai! Ai! *Tuta — phuta!* My *Memsahib!* Not getting — not have got! — *Pusseena agya!* (The sweat has come.) (*Fiercely to* G.) TUM *jao Doctor Sahib ko jaldi!* (*You* go to the doctor.) *Oh*, my *Memsahib!*

DOCTOR. (*Entering hastily.*) Come away, Gadsby. (*Bends over bed.*) Eh! The Dev — What inspired you to stop the punkah? Get out, man — go away — wait outside! *Go!* Here, *ayah!* (*Over his shoulder to* G.) Mind, I promise nothing.

The dawn breaks as G. *stumbles into the garden.*

CAPT. M. (*Reining up at the gate on his way to parade and very soberly.*) Old man, how goes?

CAPT. G. (*Dazed.*) I don't quite know. Stay a bit. Have a drink or something. Don't run away. You're just getting amusing. Ha! Ha!

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) What *am* I let in for? Gaddy has aged ten years in the night.

CAPT. G. (*Slowly, fingering charger's headstall.*) Your curb's too loose.

CAPT. M. So it is. Put it straight, will you?

(*Aside.*) I shall be late for parade. Poor Gaddy!

CAPT. G. *links and unlinks curb-chain aimlessly, and finally stands staring towards the verandah. The day brightens.*

DOCTOR. (*Knocked out of professional gravity, tramping across flower-beds and shaking* G.'s *hands.*) It's—it's—it's!—Gadsby, there's a fair chance—a *dashed* fair chance! The flicker, y'know. The sweat, y'know! I *saw* how it would be. The punkah, y'know. Deuced clever woman that *ayah* of yours. Stopped the punkah just at the right time. A *dashed* good chance! No—you don't go in. We'll pull her through yet, I promise on my reputation—under Providence. Send a man with this note to Bingle. Two heads better than one. 'Specially the *ayah! We'll* pull her round. (*Retreats hastily to house.*)

CAPT. G. (*His head on neck of* M.'s *charger.*) *Jack!* I bub—bub—believe I'm going to make a bub—bub—bloody exhibitiod of byself.

CAPT. M. (*Sniffing openly and feeling in his left cuff.*) I b-b—believe I'b doing it already. Old

bad, what *cad* I say? I'b as pleased as—Cod *dab* you, Gaddy! You're one big idiot and I'b adother. (*Pulling himself together.*) Sit tight! Here comes the Devil-dodger.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (*Who is not in the Doctor's confidence.*) We—we are only men in these things, Gadsby. I know that I can say nothing now to help——

CAPT. M. (*Jealously.*) Then don't say it! Leave him alone. It's not bad enough to croak over. Here, Gaddy, take the *chit* to Bingle and ride hell-for-leather. It'll do you good. I can't go.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. Do him good! (*Smiling.*) Give me the *chit* and I'll drive. Let him lie down. Your horse is blocking my cart—*please!*

CAPT. M. (*Slowly, without reining back.*) I beg your pardon—I'll apologise. On paper if you like.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (*Flicking* M.'s *charger.*) That'll do, thanks. Turn in, Gadsby, and I'll bring Bingle back—ahem—"hell-for-leather."

CAPT. M. (*Solus.*) It would have served me right if he'd cut me across the face. He can drive too. I shouldn't care to go that pace in a bamboo cart. What a faith he must have in his Maker—of harness! Come *hup*, you brute! (*Gallops off to parade, blowing his nose, as the sun rises.*)

(INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.)

MRS. G. (*Very white and pinched, in morning wrapper at breakfast-table.*) How big and strange the room looks, and oh how glad I am to see it again! What dust, though! I must talk to the servants. Sugar, Pip? I've almost forgotten. (*Seriously.*) Wasn't I very ill?

CAPT. G. Iller than I liked. (*Tenderly.*) Oh, you bad little Pussy, what a start you gave me!

MRS. G. I'll never do it again.

CAPT. G. You'd better not. And now get those poor pale cheeks pink again, or I shall be angry. Don't try to lift the urn. You'll upset it. Wait. (*Comes round to head of table and lifts urn.*)

MRS. G. (*Quickly.*) *Khitmatgar bowarchi-khana see kettly lao.* (Butler, get a kettle from the cook-house.) (*Drawing down* G.'s *face to her own.*) Pip dear, *I* remember.

CAPT. G. What?

MRS. G. That last terrible night.

CAPT. G. Then just you forget all about it.

MRS. G. (*Softly, her eyes filling.*) Never. It has brought us *very* close together, my husband. There! (*Interlude.*) I'm going to give Junda a *saree.*

CAPT. G. I gave her fifty dibs.

MRS. G. So she told me. It was a 'normous reward. Was I worth it? (*Several interludes.*) Don't! Here's the *khitmatgar.* — Two lumps or one, Sir?

THE SWELLING OF JORDAN

If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

SCENE.—*The* GADSBYS' *bungalow in the Plains, on a January morning.* MRS. G. *arguing with bearer in back verandah.*

CAPT. M. *rides up.*

CAPT. M. 'Mornin', Mrs. Gadsby. How's the Infant Phenomenon and the Proud Proprietor?

MRS. G. You'll find them in the front verandah; go through the house. I'm Martha just now.

CAPT. M. Cumbered about with cares of *khitmatgars?* I fly.

Passes into front verandah, where GADSBY *is watching* GADSBY JUNIOR, *aged ten months, crawling about the matting.*

CAPT. M. What's the trouble, Gaddy — spoiling an honest man's Europe morning this way? (*Seeing* G. JUNIOR.) By Jove, that yearling's comin' on amazingly! Any amount of bone below the knee there.

CAPT. G. Yes, he's a healthy little scoundrel. Don't you think his hair's growing?

M. Let's have a look. Hi! Hst! Come here, General Luck, and we'll report on you.

MRS. G. (*Within.*) What absurd name will you give him next? Why do you call him that?

M. Isn't he our Inspector-General of Cavalry? Doesn't he come down in his seventeen-two perambulator every morning the Pink Hussars parade? Don't wriggle, Brigadier. Give us your private opinion on the way the third squadron went past. 'Trifle ragged, weren't they?

G. A bigger set of tailors than the new draft I don't wish to see. They've given me more than my fair share — knocking the squadron out of shape. It's sickening!

M. When you're in command, you'll do better, young 'un. Can't you walk yet? Grip my finger and try. (*To* G.) 'Twon't hurt his hocks, will it?

G. Oh, no. Don't let him flop, though, or he'll lick all the blacking off your boots.

MRS. G. (*Within.*) Who's destroying my son's character?

M. And my Godson's. I'm ashamed of you, Gaddy. Punch your father in the eye, Jack! Don't you stand it! Hit him again!

G. (*Sotto voce.*) Put The *Butcha* down and come to the end of the verandah. I'd rather the Wife didn't hear — just now.

M. You look awf'ly serious. Anything wrong?

G. 'Depends on your view entirely. I say, Jack, you won't think more hardly of me than you can help, will you? Come further this way.— The fact of the matter is, that I've made up my mind — at least I'm thinking seriously of — cutting the Service.

M. Hwhatt?

G. Don't shout. I'm going to send in my papers.

M. You! Are you mad?

G. No — only married.

M. Look here! What's the meaning of it all? You never intend to leave *us*. You *can't*. Isn't the best squadron of the best regiment of the best cavalry in all the world good enough for you?

G. (*Jerking his head over his shoulder.*) She doesn't seem to thrive in this God-forsaken country, and there's The *Butcha* to be considered, and all that, you know.

M. Does she say that she doesn't like India?

G. That's the worst of it. She won't for fear of leaving me.

M. What are the Hills made for?

G. Not for *my* wife, at any rate.

M. You know too much, Gaddy, and — I don't like you any the better for it!

G. Never mind that. She wants England, and

The *Butcha* would be all the better for it. I'm going to chuck. You don't understand.

M. (*Hotly.*) I understand *this*. One hundred and thirty-seven new horses to be licked into shape somehow before Luck comes round again; a hairy-heeled draft who'll give more trouble than the horses; a camp next cold weather for a certainty; ourselves the first on the roster; the Russian shindy ready to come to a head at five minutes' notice, and you, the best of us all, backing out of it all! Think a little, Gaddy. You *won't* do it.

G. Hang it, a man has some duties towards his family, I suppose.

M. I remember a man, though, who told me, the night after Amdheran, when we were picketed under Jagai, and he'd left his sword — by the way, did you ever pay Ranken for that sword? — in an Utmanzai's head — that man told me that he'd stick by me and the Pinks as long as he lived. I don't blame him for not sticking by me — I'm not much of a man — but I *do* blame him for not sticking by the Pink Hussars.

G. (*Uneasily.*) We were little more than boys then. Can't you see, Jack, how things stand? 'Tisn't as if we were serving for our bread. We've all of us, more or less, got the filthy lucre. I'm luckier than some, perhaps. There's no *call* for me to serve on.

M. None in the world for you or for us, except

the Regimental. If you don't choose to answer to *that*, of course ——

G. Don't be too hard on a man. You know that a lot of us only take up the thing for a few years, and then go back to Town and catch on with the rest.

M. Not lots, and they aren't some of *Us*.

G. And then there are one's affairs at Home to be considered — my place and the rents, and all that. I don't suppose my father can last much longer, and that means the title, and so on.

M. 'Fraid you won't be entered in the Stud Book correctly unless you go Home? Take six months, then, and come out in October. If I could slay off a brother or two, I s'pose I should be a Marquis of sorts. Any fool can be that; but it needs *men*, Gaddy — men like you — to lead flanking squadrons properly. Don't you delude yourself into the belief that you're going Home to take your place and prance about among pink-nosed Kabuli dowagers. You aren't built that way. I know better.

G. A man has a right to live his life as happily as he can. *You* aren't married.

M. No — praise be to Providence and the one or two women who have had the good sense to *jawab* me.

G. Then you don't know what it is to go into your own room and see your wife's head on the

pillow, and when everything else is safe and the house shut up for the night, to wonder whether the roof-beams won't give and kill her.

M. (*Aside.*) Revelations first and second. (*Aloud.*) So-o! I knew a man who got squiffy at our Mess once and confided to me that he never helped his wife on to her horse without praying that she'd break her neck before she came back. All husbands aren't alike, you see.

G. What on earth has that to do with my case? The man must ha' been mad, or his wife as bad as they make 'em.

M. (*Aside.*) 'No fault of yours if either weren't all you say. You've forgotten the time when you were insane about the Herriott woman. You always were a good hand at forgetting. (*Aloud.*) Not more mad than men who go to the other extreme. Be reasonable, Gaddy. Your roof-beams are sound enough.

G. That was only a way of speaking. I've been uneasy and worried about the Wife ever since that awful business three years ago — when — I nearly lost her. Can you wonder?

M. Oh, a shell never falls twice in the same place. You've paid your toll to misfortune — why should your Wife be picked out any more than anybody else's?

G. I can *talk* just as reasonably as you can, but you don't understand — you don't understand.

And then there's The *Butcha*. Deuce knows where the *ayah* takes him to sit in the evening! He has a bit of a cough. Haven't you noticed it?

M. Bosh! The Brigadier's jumping out of his skin with pure condition. He's got a muzzle like a rose-leaf and the chest of a two-year-old. What's demoralised you?

G. Funk. That's the long and the short of it. Funk!

M. But what *is* there to funk?

G. Everything. It's ghastly.

M. Ah! I see.

> You don't want to fight,
> And by Jingo when we do,
> You've got the kid, you've got the Wife,
> You've got the money, too.

That's about the case, eh?

G. I suppose that's it. But it's not for myself. It's because of *them*. At least I think it is.

M. Are you sure? Looking at the matter in a cold-blooded light, the Wife is provided for even if you were wiped out to-night. She has an ancestral home to go to, money, and the Brigadier to carry on the illustrious name.

G. Then it is for myself or because they are part of me. You don't see it. My life's so good, so pleasant, as it is, that I want to make it quite safe. Can't you understand?

M. Perfectly. "Shelter-pit for the Orf'cer's charger," as they say in the Line.

G. And I have everything to my hand to make it so. I'm sick of the strain and the worry for their sakes out here; and there isn't a single real difficulty to prevent my dropping it altogether. It'll only cost me — Jack, I hope you'll never know the shame that I've been going through for the past six months.

M. Hold on there! I don't wish to be told. Every man has his moods and tenses sometimes.

G. (*Laughing bitterly.*) Has he? What do you call craning over to see where your near-fore lands?

M. In my case it means that I have been on the Considerable Bend, and have come to parade with a Head and a Hand. It passes in three strides.

G. (*Lowering voice.*) It *never* passes with me, Jack. I'm always thinking about it. Phil Gadsby funking a fall on parade! Sweet picture, isn't it! Draw it for me.

M. (*Gravely.*) Heaven forbid! A man like you can't be as bad as that. A fall is no nice thing, but one never gives it a thought.

G. Doesn't one? Wait till you've got a wife and a youngster of your own, and then you'll know how the roar of the squadron behind you turns you cold all up the back.

M. (*Aside.*) And this man led at Amdheran after Bagal-Deasin went under, and we were all mixed up together, and he came out of the show dripping like a butcher. (*Aloud.*) Skittles! The men can always open out, and you can always pick your way more or less. *We* haven't the dust to bother us, as the men have, and whoever heard of a horse stepping on a man?

G. Never—as long as he can see. But did they open out for poor Errington?

M. Oh, this is childish!

G. I know it is, worse than that. I don't care. You've ridden Van Loo. Is he the sort of brute to pick his way—'specially when we're coming up in column of troop with any pace on?

M. Once in a Blue Moon do we gallop in column of troop, and then only to save time. Aren't three lengths enough for you?

G. Yes—quite enough. They just allow for the full development of the smash. I'm talking like a cur, I know: but I tell you that, for the past three months, I've felt every hoof of the squadron in the small of my back every time that I've led.

M. But, Gaddy, this is awful!

G. Isn't it lovely? Isn't it royal? A Captain of the Pink Hussars watering up his charger before parade like the blasted boozing Colonel of a Black Regiment!

M. You never did!

G. Once only. He squelched like a *mussuck*, and the Troop-Sergeant-Major cocked his eye at me. You know old Haffy's eye. I was afraid to do it again.

M. I should think so. That was the best way to rupture old Van Loo's tummy, and make him crumple you up. You *knew* that.

G. I didn't care. It took the edge off him.

M. "Took the edge off him"? Gaddy, you—you—you *mustn't*, you know! Think of the men.

G. That's another thing I am afraid of. D'you s'pose they know?

M. Let's hope not; but they're deadly quick to spot skrim—little things of that kind. See here, old man, send the Wife Home for the hot weather and come to Kashmir with me. We'll start a boat on the Dal or cross the Rhotang—shoot ibex or loaf—which you please. Only *come!* You're a bit off your oats and you're talking nonsense. Look at the Colonel—swag-bellied rascal that he is. He has a wife and no end of a bow-window of his own. Can any one of us ride round him—chalkstones and all? I can't, and I think I can shove a crock along a bit.

G. Some men are different. I haven't the nerve. Lord help me, I haven't the nerve! I've taken up a hole and a half to get my knees well under the wallets. I can't help it. I'm so afraid of any-

thing happening to me. On my soul, I ought to be broke in front of the squadron for cowardice.

M. Ugly word, that. I should never have the courage to own up.

G. I meant to lie about my reasons when I began, but—I've got out of the habit of lying to you, old man. Jack, you won't?—But I know you won't.

M. Of course not. (*Half aloud.*) The Pinks are paying dearly for their Pride.

G. Eh! Wha-at?

M. Don't you know? The men have called Mrs. Gadsby the Pride of the Pink Hussars ever since she came to us.

G. 'Tisn't *her* fault. Don't think that. It's all mine.

M. What does she say?

G. I haven't exactly put it before her. She's the best little woman in the world, Jack, and all that—but she wouldn't counsel a man to stick to his calling if it came between him and her. At least, I think ——

M. Never mind. Don't tell her what you told me. Go on the Peerage and Landed-Gentry tack.

G. She'd see through it. She's five times cleverer than I am.

M. (*Aside.*) Then she'll accept the sacrifice and think a little bit worse of him for the rest of her days.

G. (*Absently.*) I say, do you despise me?

M. 'Queer way of putting it. Have you ever been asked that question. Think a minute. What answer used you to give?

G. So bad as *that?* I'm not entitled to expect anything more; but it's a bit hard when one's best friend turns round and ——

M. So *I* have found. But you will have consolations — Bailiffs and Drains and Liquid Manure and the Primrose League, and, perhaps, if you're lucky, the Colonelcy of a Yeomanry Cav-al-ry Regiment — all uniform and no riding, I believe. How old are you?

G. Thirty-three. I know it's ——

M. At forty you'll be a fool of a J. P. landlord. At fifty you'll own a bath-chair, and The Brigadier, if he takes after you, will be fluttering the dovecotes of — what's the particular dunghill you're going to? Also, Mrs. Gadsby will be fat.

G. (*Limply.*) This is rather more than a joke.

M. D'you think so? Isn't cutting the Service a joke? It generally takes a man fifty years to arrive at it. You're quite right, though. It is more than a joke. You've managed it in thirty-three.

G. Don't make me feel worse than I do. Will it satisfy you if I own that I am a shirker, a skrimshanker, and a coward?

M. It will *not*, because I'm the only man in the

world who can talk to you like this without being knocked down. You mustn't take all that I've said to heart in this way. I only spoke — a lot of it at least — out of pure selfishness, because, because — Oh, damn it all, old man,— I don't know *what* I shall do without you. Of course, you've got the money and the place and all that — and there are two very good reasons why you should take care of yourself.

G. 'Doesn't make it any the sweeter. I'm backing out — I know I am. I always had a soft drop in me somewhere — and I daren't risk any danger to *them.*

M. Why in the world should you? You're bound to think of your family — bound to think. Er-hmm. If I wasn't a younger son I'd go too — be shot if I wouldn't!

G. Thank you, Jack. It's a kind lie, but it's the blackest you've told for some time. I know what I'm doing, and I'm going into it with my eyes open. Old man, I *can't* help it. What would you do if you were in my place?

M. (*Aside.*) 'Couldn't conceive any woman getting permanently between me and the Regiment. (*Aloud.*) 'Can't say. 'Very likely I should do no better. I'm sorry for you — awf'ly sorry — but " if them's your sentiments," I believe, I really do, that you are acting wisely.

G. Do you? I hope you do. (*In a whisper.*)

Jack, be very sure of yourself before you marry. I'm an ungrateful ruffian to say this, but marriage — even as good a marriage as mine has been — hampers a man's work, it cripples his sword-arm, and oh, it plays Hell with his notions of duty. Sometimes — good and sweet as she is — sometimes I could wish that I had kept my freedom — No, I don't mean that exactly.

MRS. G. (*Coming down verandah.*) What are you wagging your head over, Pip?

M. (*Turning quickly.*) Me, as usual. The old sermon. Your husband is recommending me to get married. 'Never saw such a one-idea'd man!

MRS. G. Well, why don't you? I daresay you would make some woman very happy.

G. There's the Law and the Prophets, Jack. Never mind the Regiment. Make a woman happy. (*Aside.*) O Lord!

M. We'll see. I must be off to make a Troop Cook desperately unhappy. I won't have the wily Hussar fed on Government Bullock Train shin-bones — (*Hastily.*) Surely black ants can't be good for the Brigadier. He's picking 'em off the matting and eating 'em. Here, Señor Comandante Don Grubbynose, come and talk to me. (*Lifts* G. JUNIOR *in his arms.*) 'Want my watch? You won't be able to put it into your mouth, but you can try. (G. JUNIOR *drops watch, breaking dial and hands.*)

Mrs. G. Oh, Captain Mafflin, I *am* so sorry! Jack, you bad, bad little villain! Ahhh!

M. It's not the least consequence, I assure you. He'd treat the world in the same way if he could get it into his hands. Everything's made to be played with and broken, isn't it, young 'un?

. . . . . .

Mrs. G. Mafflin didn't at all like his watch being broken, though he was too polite to say so. It was entirely his fault for giving it to the child. Dem little puds are werry, werry feeble, aren't dey, my Jack-in-de-box? (*To* G.) What did he want to see you for?

G. Regimental shop, as usual.

Mrs. G. The Regiment! *Always* the Regiment. On my word, I sometimes feel jealous of Mafflin.

G. (*Wearily.*) Poor old Jack? I don't think you need. Isn't it time for The *Butcha* to have his nap? Bring a chair out here, dear. I've got something to talk over with you.

And this is the End of the Story of the Gadsbys.

L'ENVOI

WHAT is the moral? Who rides may read.
When the night is thick and the tracks are blind,
A friend at a pinch is a friend indeed,
But a fool to wait for the laggard behind:
Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

White hands cling to the tightened rein,
Slipping the spur from the booted heel,
Tenderest voices cry, "Turn again,"
Red lips tarnish the scabbarded steel,
High hopes faint on a warm hearth-stone —
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

One may fall, but he falls by himself —
Falls by himself with himself to blame;
One may attain and to him is the pelf,
Loot of the city in Gold or Fame:
Plunder of earth shall be all his own
Who travels the fastest and travels alone.

Wherefore the more ye be holpen and stayed —
Stayed by a friend in the hour of toil,
Sing the heretical song I have made —
His be the labour and yours be the spoil.
Win by his aid and the aid disown —
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

WEE WILLIE WINKIE

WEE WILLIE WINKIE

"An officer and a gentleman."

His full name was Percival William Williams, but he picked up the other name in a nursery-book, and that was the end of the christened titles. His mother's *ayah* called him Willie-*Baba*, but as he never paid the faintest attention to anything that the *ayah* said, her wisdom did not help matters.

His father was the Colonel of the 195th, and as soon as Wee Willie Winkie was old enough to understand what Military Discipline meant, Colonel Williams put him under it. There was no other way of managing the child. When he was good for a week, he drew good-conduct pay; and when he was bad, he was deprived of his good-conduct stripe. Generally he was bad, for India offers many chances of going wrong to little six-year-olds.

Children resent familiarity from strangers, and Wee Willie Winkie was a very particular child. Once he accepted an acquaintance, he was graciously pleased to thaw. He accepted Brandis, a subaltern of the 195th, on sight. Brandis was

having tea at the Colonel's, and Wee Willie Winkie entered strong in the possession of a good-conduct badge won for not chasing the hens round the compound. He regarded Brandis with gravity for at least ten minutes, and then delivered himself of his opinion.

"I like you," said he slowly, getting off his chair and coming over to Brandis. "I like you. I shall call you Coppy, because of your hair. Do you *mind* being called Coppy? It is because of ve hair, you know."

Here was one of the most embarrassing of Wee Willie Winkie's peculiarities. He would look at a stranger for some time, and then, without warning or explanation, would give him a name. And the name stuck. No regimental penalties could break Wee Willie Winkie of this habit. He lost his good-conduct badge for christening the Commissioner's wife "Pobs"; but nothing that the Colonel could do made the Station forego the nickname, and Mrs. Collen remained "Pobs" till the end of her stay. So Brandis was christened "Coppy," and rose, therefore, in the estimation of the regiment.

If Wee Willie Winkie took an interest in any one, the fortunate man was envied alike by the mess and the rank and file. And in their envy lay no suspicion of self-interest. "The Colonel's son" was idolised on his own merits entirely.

Yet Wee Willie Winkie was not lovely. His face was permanently freckled, as his legs were permanently scratched, and in spite of his mother's almost tearful remonstrances he had insisted upon having his long yellow locks cut short in the military fashion. "I want my hair like Sergeant Tummil's," said Wee Willie Winkie, and, his father abetting, the sacrifice was accomplished.

Three weeks after the bestowal of his youthful affections on Lieutenant Brandis—henceforward to be called "Coppy" for the sake of brevity—Wee Willie Winkie was destined to behold strange things and far beyond his comprehension.

Coppy returned his liking with interest. Coppy had let him wear for five rapturous minutes his own big sword—just as tall as Wee Willie Winkie. Coppy had promised him a terrier puppy, and Coppy had permitted him to witness the miraculous operation of shaving. Nay, more—Coppy had said that even he, Wee Willie Winkie, would rise in time to the ownership of a box of shiny knives, a silver soap-box, and a silver-handled "sputter-brush," as Wee Willie Winkie called it. Decidedly, there was no one except his own father, who could give or take away good-conduct badges at pleasure, half so wise, strong, and valiant as Coppy with the Afghan and Egyptian medals on his breast. Why, then, should Coppy be guilty of the unmanly weakness of kiss-

ing — vehemently kissing — a "big girl," Miss Allardyce to wit? In the course of a morning ride Wee Willie Winkie had seen Coppy so doing, and, like the gentleman he was, had promptly wheeled round and cantered back to his groom, lest the groom should also see.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have spoken to his father, but he felt instinctively that this was a matter on which Coppy ought first to be consulted.

"Coppy," shouted Wee Willie Winkie, reining up outside that subaltern's bungalow early one morning — "I want to see you, Coppy!"

"Come in, young 'un," returned Coppy, who was at early breakfast in the midst of his dogs. "What mischief have you been getting into now?"

Wee Willie Winkie had done nothing notoriously bad for three days, and so stood on a pinnacle of virtue.

"*I've* been doing nothing bad," said he, curling himself into a long chair with a studious affectation of the Colonel's languor after a hot parade. He buried his freckled nose in a tea-cup and, with eyes staring roundly over the rim, asked: "I say, Coppy, is it pwoper to kiss big girls?"

"By Jove! You're beginning early. Who do you want to kiss?"

"No one. My muvver's always kissing me if I don't stop her. If it isn't pwoper, how was you

kissing Major Allardyce's big girl last morning, by ve canal?"

Coppy's brow wrinkled. He and Miss Allardyce had with great craft managed to keep their engagement secret for a fortnight. There were urgent and imperative reasons why Major Allardyce should not know how matters stood for at least another month, and this small marplot had discovered a great deal too much.

"I saw you," said Wee Willie Winkie calmly. "But ve *sais* didn't see. I said, '*Hut jao!*'"

"Oh, you had that much sense, you young Rip," groaned poor Coppy, half amused and half angry. "And how many people may you have told about it?"

"Only me myself. You didn't tell when I twied to wide ve buffalo ven my pony was lame; and I fought you wouldn't like."

"Winkie," said Coppy enthusiastically, shaking the small hand, "you're the best of good fellows. Look here, you can't understand all these things. One of these days — hang it, how can I make you see it! — I'm going to marry Miss Allardyce, and then she'll be Mrs. Coppy, as you say. If your young mind is so scandalised at the idea of kissing big girls, go and tell your father."

"What will happen?" said Wee Willie Winkie, who firmly believed that his father was omnipotent.

"I shall get into trouble," said Coppy, playing his trump card with an appealing look at the holder of the ace.

"Ven I won't," said Wee Willie Winkie briefly. "But my faver says it's un-man-ly to be always kissing, and I didn't fink *you'd* do vat, Coppy."

"I'm not always kissing, old chap. It's only now and then, and when you're bigger you'll do it too. Your father meant it's not good for little boys."

"Ah!" said Wee Willie Winkie, now fully enlightened. "It's like ve sputter-brush?"

"Exactly," said Coppy gravely.

"But I don't fink I'll ever want to kiss big girls, nor no one, 'cept my muvver. And I *must* do vat, you know."

There was a long pause, broken by Wee Willie Winkie.

"Are you fond of vis big girl, Coppy?"

"Awfully!" said Coppy.

"Fonder van you are of Bell or ve Butcha — or me?"

"It's in a different way," said Coppy. "You see, one of these days Miss Allardyce will belong to me, but you'll grow up and command the Regiment and — all sorts of things. It's quite different, you see."

"Very well," said Wee Willie Winkie, rising.

"If you're fond of ve big girl, I won't tell any one. I must go now."

Coppy rose and escorted his small guest to the door, adding — "You're the best of little fellows, Winkie. I tell you what. In thirty days from now you can tell if you like — tell any one you like."

Thus the secret of the Brandis-Allardyce engagement was dependent on a little child's word. Coppy, who knew Wee Willie Winkie's idea of truth, was at ease, for he felt that he would not break promises. Wee Willie Winkie betrayed a special and unusual interest in Miss Allardyce, and, slowly revolving round that embarrassed young lady, was used to regard her gravely with unwinking eye. He was trying to discover why Coppy should have kissed her. She was not half so nice as his own mother. On the other hand, she was Coppy's property, and would in time belong to him. Therefore it behooved him to treat her with as much respect as Coppy's big sword or shiny pistol.

The idea that he shared a great secret in common with Coppy kept Wee Willie Winkie unusually virtuous for three weeks. Then the Old Adam broke out, and he made what he called a "camp-fire" at the bottom of the garden. How could he have foreseen that the flying sparks would have lighted the Colonel's little hay-rick

and consumed a week's store for the horses? Sudden and swift was the punishment — deprivation of the good-conduct badge and, most sorrowful of all, two days' confinement to barracks — the house and verandah — coupled with the withdrawal of the light of his father's countenance.

He took the sentence like the man he strove to be, drew himself up with a quivering under-lip, saluted, and, once clear of the room, ran to weep bitterly in his nursery — called by him "my quarters." Coppy came in the afternoon and attempted to console the culprit.

"I'm under awwest," said Wee Willie Winkie mournfully, "and I didn't ought to speak to you."

Very early the next morning he climbed on to the roof of the house — that was not forbidden — and beheld Miss Allardyce going for a ride.

"Where are you going?" cried Wee Willie Winkie.

"Across the river," she answered, and trotted forward.

Now the cantonment in which the 195th lay was bounded on the north by a river — dry in the winter. From his earliest years, Wee Willie Winkie had been forbidden to go across the river, and had noted that even Coppy — the almost almighty Coppy — had never set foot beyond it. Wee Willie Winkie had once been read to, out of a big blue book, the history of the Princess

and the Goblins — a most wonderful tale of a land where the Goblins were always warring with the children of men until they were defeated by one Curdie. Ever since that date it seemed to him that the bare black and purple hills across the river were inhabited by Goblins, and, in truth, every one had said that there lived the Bad Men. Even in his own house the lower halves of the windows were covered with green paper on account of the Bad Men who might, if allowed clear view, fire into peaceful drawing-rooms and comfortable bedrooms. Certainly, beyond the river, which was the end of all the Earth, lived the Bad Men. And here was Major Allardyce's big girl, Coppy's property, preparing to venture into their borders! What would Coppy say if anything happened to her? If the Goblins ran off with her as they did with Curdie's Princess? She must at all hazards be turned back.

The house was still. Wee Willie Winkie reflected for a moment on the very terrible wrath of his father; and then — broke his arrest! It was a crime unspeakable. The low sun threw his shadow, very large and very black, on the trim garden-paths, as he went down to the stables and ordered his pony. It seemed to him in the hush of the dawn that all the big world had been bidden to stand still and look at Wee Willie Winkie guilty of mutiny. The drowsy *sais* gave him his

mount, and, since the one great sin made all others insignificant, Wee Willie Winkie said that he was going to ride over to Coppy Sahib, and went out at a foot-pace, stepping on the soft mould of the flower-borders.

The devastating track of the pony's feet was the last misdeed that cut him off from all sympathy of Humanity. He turned into the road, leaned forward, and rode as fast as the pony could put foot to the ground in the direction of the river.

But the liveliest of twelve-two ponies can do little against the long canter of a Waler. Miss Allardyce was far ahead, had passed through the crops, beyond the Police-posts, when all the guards were asleep, and her mount was scattering the pebbles of the river-bed as Wee Willie Winkie left the cantonment and British India behind him. Bowed forward and still flogging, Wee Willie Winkie shot into Afghan territory, and could just see Miss Allardyce a black speck flickering across the stony plain. The reason of her wandering was simple enough. Coppy, in a tone of too-hastily-assumed authority, had told her over night that she must not ride out by the river. And she had gone to prove her own spirit and teach Coppy a lesson.

Almost at the foot of the inhospitable hills, Wee Willie Winkie saw the Waler blunder and come down heavily. Miss Allardyce struggled

clear, but her ankle had been severely twisted, and she could not stand. Having fully shown her spirit, she wept, and was surprised by the apparition of a white, wide-eyed child in khaki, on a nearly spent pony.

"Are you badly, badly hurted?" shouted Wee Willie Winkie, as soon as he was within range. "You didn't ought to be here."

"I don't know," said Miss Allardyce ruefully, ignoring the reproof. "Good gracious, child, what are *you* doing here?"

"You said you was going acwoss ve wiver," panted Wee Willie Winkie, throwing himself off his pony. "And nobody — not even Coppy — must go acwoss ve wiver, and I came after you ever so hard, but you wouldn't stop, and now you've hurted yourself, and Coppy will be angwy wiv me, and — I've bwoken my awwest! I've bwoken my awwest!"

The future Colonel of the 195th sat down and sobbed. In spite of the pain in her ankle, the girl was moved.

"Have you ridden all the way from cantonments, little man? What for?"

"You belonged to Coppy. Coppy told me so!" wailed Wee Willie Winkie disconsolately. "I saw him kissing you, and he said he was fonder of you van Bell or ve Butcha or me. And so I came. You must get up and come back. You

didn't ought to be here. Vis is a bad place, and I've bwoken my awwest."

"I can't move, Winkie," said Miss Allardyce, with a groan. "I've hurt my foot. What shall I do?"

She showed a readiness to weep anew, which steadied Wee Willie Winkie, who had been brought up to believe that tears were the depth of unmanliness. Still, when one is as great a sinner as Wee Willie Winkie, even a man may be permitted to break down.

"Winkie," said Miss Allardyce, "when you've rested a little, ride back and tell them to send out something to carry me back in. It hurts fearfully."

The child sat still for a little time, and Miss Allardyce closed her eyes; the pain was nearly making her faint. She was roused by Wee Willie Winkie tying up the reins on his pony's neck and setting it free with a vicious cut of his whip that made it whicker. The little animal headed towards the cantonments.

"Oh, Winkie! What are you doing?"

"Hush!" said Wee Willie Winkie. "Vere's a man coming — one of ve Bad Men. I must stay wiv you. My faver says a man must *always* look after a girl. Jack will go home, and ven vey'll come and look for us. Vat's why I let him go."

Not one man, but two or three, had appeared

from behind the rocks of the hills, and the heart of Wee Willie Winkie sank within him, for just in this manner were the Goblins wont to steal out and vex Curdie's soul. Thus had they played in Curdie's garden (he had seen the picture), and thus had they frightened the Princess's nurse. He heard them talking to each other, and recognised with joy the bastard Pushto that he had picked up from one of his father's grooms lately dismissed. People who spoke that tongue could not be the Bad Men. They were only natives, after all.

They came up to the boulders on which Miss Allardyce's horse had blundered.

Then rose from the rock Wee Willie Winkie, child of the Dominant Race, aged six and three-quarters, and said briefly and emphatically, "*Jao!*" The pony had crossed the river-bed.

The man laughed, and laughter from natives was the one thing Wee Willie Winkie could not tolerate. He asked them what they wanted and why they did not depart. Other men with most evil faces and crooked-stocked guns crept out of the shadows of the hills, till, soon, Wee Willie Winkie was face to face with an audience some twenty strong. Miss Allardyce screamed.

"Who are you?" said one of the men.

"I am the Colonel Sahib's son, and my order is that you go at once. You black men are frightening the Miss Sahib. One of you must run into

cantonments and take the news that the Miss Sahib has hurt herself, and that the Colonel's son is here with her."

"Put our feet into the trap?" was the laughing reply. "Hear this boy's speech!"

"Say that I sent you — I, the Colonel's son. They will give you money."

"What is the use of this talk? Take up the child and the girl, and we can at least ask for the ransom. Ours are the villages on the heights," said a voice in the background.

These *were* the Bad Men — worse than Goblins — and it needed all Wee Willie Winkie's training to prevent him from bursting into tears. But he felt that to cry before a native, excepting only his mother's *ayah*, would be an infamy greater than any mutiny. Moreover, he, as future Colonel of the 195th, had that grim regiment at his back.

"Are you going to carry us away?" said Wee Willie Winkie, very blanched and uncomfortable.

"Yes, my little Sahib Bahadur," said the tallest of the men, "and eat you afterwards."

"That is child's talk," said Wee Willie Winkie. "Men do not eat men."

A yell of laughter interrupted him, but he went on firmly—"And if you do carry us away, I tell you that all my regiment will come up in a day and kill you all without leaving one. Who will take my message to the Colonel Sahib?"

Speech in any vernacular — and Wee Willie Winkie had a colloquial acquaintance with three — was easy to the boy who could not yet manage his "r's" and "th's" aright.

Another man joined the conference, crying, "O foolish men! What this babe says is true. He is the heart's heart of those white troops. For the sake of peace let them go both, for if he be taken, the regiment will break loose and gut the valley. *Our* villages are in the valley, and we shall not escape. That regiment are devils. They broke Khoda Yar's breastbone with kicks when he tried to take the rifles; and if we touch this child they will fire and rape and plunder for a month till nothing remains. Better to send a man back to take the message and get a reward. I say that this child is their God, and that they will spare none of us, nor our women, if we harm him."

It was Din Mahommed, the dismissed groom of the Colonel, who made the diversion, and an angry and heated discussion followed. Wee Willie Winkie, standing over Miss Allardyce, waited the upshot. Surely his "wegiment," his own "wegiment," would not desert him if they knew of his extremity.

. . . . . .

The riderless pony brought the news to the 195th, though there had been consternation in the

Colonel's household for an hour before. The little beast came in through the parade-ground in front of the main barracks, where the men were settling down to play Spoil-five till the afternoon. Devlin, the Colour-Sergeant of E Company, glanced at the empty saddle and tumbled through the barrack-rooms, kicking up each Room Corporal as he passed. "Up, ye beggars! There's something happened to the Colonel's son," he shouted.

"He couldn't fall off! S'elp me, 'e *couldn't* fall off," blubbered a drummer-boy. "Go an' hunt acrost the river. He's over there if he's anywhere, an' maybe those Pathans have got 'im. For the love o' Gawd don't look for 'im in the nullahs! Let's go over the river."

"There's sense in Mott yet," said Devlin. "E Company, double out to the river — sharp!"

So E Company, in its shirt-sleeves mainly, doubled for the dear life, and in the rear toiled the perspiring Sergeant, adjuring it to double yet faster. The cantonment was alive with the men of the 195th hunting for Wee Willie Winkie, and the Colonel finally overtook E Company, far too exhausted to swear, struggling in the pebbles of the river-bed.

Up the hill under which Wee Willie Winkie's Bad Men were discussing the wisdom of carrying off the child and the girl, a look-out fired two shots.

"What have I said?" shouted Din Mahommed. "There is the warning!" The *pulton* are out already and are coming across the plain! Get away! Let us not be seen with the boy!"

The men waited for an instant, and then, as another shot was fired, withdrew into the hills, silently as they had appeared.

"The wegiment is coming," said Wee Willie Winkie confidently to Miss Allardyce, "and it's all wight. Don't cwy!"

He needed the advice himself, for ten minutes later, when his father came up, he was weeping bitterly with his head in Miss Allardyce's lap.

And the men of the 195th carried him home with shouts and rejoicings; and Coppy, who had ridden a horse into a lather, met him, and, to his intense disgust, kissed him openly in the presence of the men.

But there was balm for his dignity. His father assured him that not only would the breaking of arrest be condoned, but that the good-conduct badge would be restored as soon as his mother could sew it on his blouse-sleeve. Miss Allardyce had told the Colonel a story that made him proud of his son.

"She belonged to you, Coppy," said Wee Willie Winkie, indicating Miss Allardyce with a grimy forefinger. "I *knew* she didn't ought to go acwoss

ve wiver, and I knew ve wegiment would come to me if I sent Jack home."

"You're a hero, Winkie," said Coppy — "a *pukka* hero!"

"I don't know what vat means," said Wee Willie Winkie, "but you mustn't call me Winkie any no more. I'm Percival Will'am Will'ams."

And in this manner did Wee Willie Winkie enter into his manhood.

HIS MAJESTY THE KING

Where the word of a King is, there is power: And who may say unto him — What doest thou?

"Yeth! And Chimo to sleep at ve foot of ve bed, and ve pink pikky-book, and ve bwead — 'cause I will be hungwy in ve night — and vat's all, Miss Biddums. And now give me one kiss and I'll go to sleep. — So! Kite quiet. Ow! Ve pink pikky-book has slidded under ve pillow and ve bread is cwumbling! Miss Biddums! Miss *Bid*-dums! I'm *so* uncomfy! Come and tuck me up, Miss Biddums."

His Majesty the King was going to bed; and poor, patient Miss Biddums, who had advertised herself humbly as a "young person, European, accustomed to the care of little children," was forced to wait upon his royal caprices. The going to bed was always a lengthy process, because His Majesty had a convenient knack of forgetting which of his many friends, from the *mehter's* son to the Commissioner's daughter, he had prayed for, and, lest the Deity should take offence, was used to toil through his little prayers, in all rever-

ence, five times in one evening. His Majesty the King believed in the efficacy of prayer as devoutly as he believed in Chimo the patient spaniel, or Miss Biddums, who could reach him down his gun — "with cursuffun caps — *reel* ones" — from the upper shelves of the big nursery cupboard.

At the door of the nursery his authority stopped. Beyond lay the empire of his father and mother — two very terrible people who had no time to waste upon His Majesty the King. His voice was lowered when he passed the frontier of his own dominions, his actions were fettered, and his soul was filled with awe because of the grim man who lived among a wilderness of pigeon-holes and the most fascinating pieces of red tape, and the wonderful woman who was always getting into or stepping out of the big carriage.

To the one belonged the mysteries of the "*duftar*-room," to the other the great, reflected wilderness of the "Memsahib's room," where the shiny, scented dresses hung on pegs, miles and miles up in the air, and the just-seen plateau of the toilet-table revealed an acreage of speckly combs, broidered "hanafitch-bags," and "white-headed" brushes.

There was no room for His Majesty the King either in official reserve or worldly gorgeousness. He had discovered that, ages and ages ago — before even Chimo came to the house, or Miss Biddums had ceased grizzling over a packet of greasy

letters which appeared to be her chief treasure on earth. His Majesty the King, therefore, wisely confined himself to his own territories, where only Miss Biddums, and she feebly, disputed his sway.

From Miss Biddums he had picked up his simple theology and welded it to the legends of gods and devils that he had learned in the servants' quarters.

To Miss Biddums he confided with equal trust his tattered garments and his more serious griefs. She would make everything whole. She knew exactly how the Earth had been born, and had reassured the trembling soul of His Majesty the King that terrible time in July when it rained continuously for seven days and seven nights, and —there was no Ark ready and all the ravens had flown away! She was the most powerful person with whom he was brought into contact—always excepting the two remote and silent people beyond the nursery door.

How was His Majesty the King to know that, six years ago, in the summer of his birth, Mrs. Austell, turning over her husband's papers, had come upon the intemperate letter of a foolish woman who had been carried away by the silent man's strength and personal beauty? How could he tell what evil the overlooked slip of notepaper had wrought in the mind of a desperately jealous wife? How could he, despite his wisdom, guess that his mother had chosen to make of it excuse

for a bar and a division between herself and her husband, that strengthened and grew harder to break with each year; that she, having unearthed this skeleton in the cupboard, had trained it into a household God which should be about their path and about their bed, and poison all their ways?

These things were beyond the province of His Majesty the King. He only knew that his father was daily absorbed in some mysterious work for a thing called the *Sirkar*, and that his mother was the victim alternately of the *Nautch* and the *Burrakhana*. To these entertainments she was escorted by a Captain-Man for whom His Majesty the King had no regard.

"He *doesn't* laugh," he argued with Miss Biddums, who would fain have taught him charity. "He only makes faces wiv his mouf, and when he wants to o-muse me I am *not* o-mused." And His Majesty the King shook his head as one who knew the deceitfulness of this world.

Morning and evening it was his duty to salute his father and mother — the former with a grave shake of the hand, and the latter with an equally grave kiss. Once, indeed, he had put his arms round his mother's neck, in the fashion he used towards Miss Biddums. The openwork of his sleeve-edge caught in an earring, and the last stage of His Majesty's little overture was a suppressed scream and summary dismissal to the nursery.

"It is w'ong," thought His Majesty the King, "to hug Memsahibs wiv fings in veir ears. I will amember." He never repeated the experiment.

Miss Biddums, it must be confessed, spoilt him as much as his nature admitted, in some sort of recompense for what she called "the hard ways of his Papa and Mamma." She, like her charge, knew nothing of the trouble between man and wife — the savage contempt for a woman's stupidity on the one side, or the dull, rankling anger on the other. Miss Biddums had looked after many little children in her time, and served in many establishments. Being a discreet woman, she observed little and said less, and when her pupils went over the sea to the Great Unknown, which she, with touching confidence in her hearers, called "Home," packed up her slender belongings and sought for employment afresh, lavishing all her love on each successive batch of ingrates. Only His Majesty the King had repaid her affection with interest; and in his uncomprehending ears she had told the tale of nearly all her hopes, her aspirations, the hopes that were dead, and the dazzling glories of her ancestral home in "*Calcutta, close to Wellington Square.*"

Everything above the average was in the eyes of His Majesty the King "Calcutta good." When Miss Biddums had crossed his royal will, he re-

versed the epithet to vex that estimable lady, and all things evil were, until the tears of repentance swept away spite, "Calcutta bad."

Now and again Miss Biddums begged for him the rare pleasure of a day in the society of the Commissioner's child — the wilful four-year-old Patsie, who, to the intense amazement of His Majesty the King, was idolised by her parents. On thinking the question out at length, by roads unknown to those who have left childhood behind, he came to the conclusion that Patsie was petted because she wore a big blue sash and yellow hair.

This precious discovery he kept to himself. The yellow hair was absolutely beyond his power, his own tousled wig being potato-brown; but something might be done towards the blue sash. He tied a large knot in his mosquito-curtains in order to remember to consult Patsie on their next meeting. She was the only child he had ever spoken to, and almost the only one that he had ever seen. The little memory and the very large and ragged knot held good.

"Patsie, lend me your blue wiband," said His Majesty the King.

"You'll bewy it," said Patsie doubtfully, mindful of certain atrocities committed on her doll.

"No, I won't — twoofanhonour. It's for me to wear."

"Pooh!" said Patsie. "Boys don't wear sa-ashes. Zey's only for dirls."

"I didn't know." The face of His Majesty the King fell.

"Who wants ribands? Are you playing horses, chickabiddies?" said the Commissioner's wife, stepping into the verandah.

"Toby wanted my sash," explained Patsie.

"I don't now," said His Majesty the King hastily, feeling that with one of these terrible "grown-ups" his poor little secret would be shamelessly wrenched from him, and perhaps — most burning desecration of all — laughed at.

"I'll give you a cracker-cap," said the Commissioner's wife. "Come along with me, Toby, and we'll choose it."

The cracker-cap was a stiff, three-pointed vermilion-and-tinsel splendour. His Majesty the King fitted it on his royal brow. The Commissioner's wife had a face that children instinctively trusted, and her action, as she adjusted the toppling middle spike, was tender.

"Will it do as well?" stammered His Majesty the King.

"As what, little one?"

"As ve wiban?"

"Oh, quite. Go and look at yourself in the glass."

The words were spoken in all sincerity and to

help forward any absurd "dressing-up" amusement that the children might take into their minds. But the young savage has a keen sense of the ludicrous. His Majesty the King swung the great cheval-glass down, and saw his head crowned with the staring horror of a fool's cap — a thing which his father would rend to pieces if it ever came into his office. He plucked it off, and burst into tears.

"Toby," said the Commissioner's wife gravely, "you shouldn't give way to temper. I am very sorry to see it. It's wrong."

His Majesty the King sobbed inconsolably, and the heart of Patsie's mother was touched. She drew the child on to her knee. Clearly it was not temper alone.

"What is it, Toby? Won't you tell me? Aren't you well?"

The torrent of sobs and speech met, and fought for a time, with chokings and gulpings and gasps. Then, in a sudden rush, His Majesty the King was delivered of a few inarticulate sounds, followed by the words — "Go a — way, you — dirty — little debbil!"

"Toby! What do you mean?"

"It's what he'd say. I *know* it is! He said vat when vere was only a little, little eggy mess on my t-t-unic; and he'd say it again, and laugh, if I went in wif vat on my head."

"Who would say that?"

"M-m-my Papa! And I fought if I had ve blue wiban, he'd let me play in ve waste-paper basket under ve table."

"*What* blue riband, childie?"

"Ve same vat Patsie had — ve big blue wiban w-w-wound my t-ttummy!"

"What is it, Toby? There's something on your mind. Tell me all about it, and perhaps I can help."

"Isn't anyfing," sniffed His Majesty, mindful of his manhood, and raising his head from the motherly bosom upon which it was resting. "I only fought vat you — you petted Patsie 'cause she had ve blue wiban, and — and if I'd had ve blue wiban too, m-my Papa w-would pet me."

The secret was out, and His Majesty the King sobbed bitterly in spite of the arms around him, and the murmur of comfort on his heated little forehead.

Enter Patsie tumultuously, embarrassed by several lengths of the Commissioner's pet *mahseer*-rod. "Tum along, Toby! Zere's a *chu-chu* lizard in ze *chick*, and I've told Chimo to watch him till we tum. If we poke him wiz zis his tail will go *wiggle-wiggle* and fall off. Tum along! I can't weach."

"I'm comin'," said His Majesty the King, climb-

ing down from the Commissioner's wife's knee after a hasty kiss.

Two minutes later, the *chu-chu* lizard's tail was wriggling on the matting of the verandah, and the children were gravely poking it with splinters from the *chick*, to urge its exhausted vitality into "just one wiggle more, 'cause it doesn't hurt *chu-chu*."

The Commissioner's wife stood in the doorway and watched — "Poor little mite! A blue sash — and my own precious Patsie! I wonder if the best of us, or we who love them best, ever understood what goes on in their topsy-turvy little heads."

She went indoors to devise a tea for His Majesty the King.

"Their souls aren't in their tummies at that age in this climate," said the Commissioner's wife, "but they are not far off. I wonder if I could make Mrs. Austell understand. Poor little fellow!"

With simple craft, the Commissioner's wife called on Mrs. Austell and spoke long and lovingly about children, inquiring specially for His Majesty the King.

"He's with his governess," said Mrs. Austell, and the tone showed that she was not interested.

The Commissioner's wife, unskilled in the art of war, continued her questionings. "I don't know," said Mrs. Austell. "These things are left to Miss Biddums, and, of course, she does not ill-treat the child."

The Commissioner's wife left hastily. The last sentence jarred upon her nerves. "Doesn't *ill-treat* the child! As if that were all! I wonder what Tom would say if I only 'didn't ill-treat' Patsie!"

Thenceforward His Majesty the King was an honoured guest at the Commissioner's house, and the chosen friend of Patsie, with whom he blundered into as many scrapes as the compound and the servants' quarters afforded. Patsie's Mamma was always ready to give counsel, help, and sympathy, and, if need were and callers few, to enter into their games with an abandon that would have shocked the sleek-haired subalterns who squirmed painfully in their chairs when they came to call on her whom they profanely nicknamed "Mother Bunch."

Yet, in spite of Patsie and Patsie's Mamma, and the love that these two lavished upon him, His Majesty the King fell grievously from grace, and committed no less a sin than that of theft — unknown, it is true, but burdensome.

There came a man to the door one day, when His Majesty was playing in the hall and the bearer had gone to dinner, with a packet for His Majesty's Mamma. And he put it upon the hall table, and said that there was no answer, and departed.

Presently, the pattern of the dado ceased to interest His Majesty, while the packet, a white, neatly wrapped one of fascinating shape, interested

him very much indeed. His Mamma was out, so was Miss Biddums, and there was pink string round the packet. He greatly desired pink string. It would help him in many of his little businesses — the haulage across the floor of his small cane-chair, the torturing of Chimo, who could never understand harness — and so forth. If he took the string it would be his own, and nobody would be any the wiser. He certainly could not pluck up sufficient courage to ask Mamma for it. Wherefore, mounting upon a chair, he carefully untied the string, and, behold, the stiff white paper spread out in four directions, and revealed a beautiful little leather box with gold lines upon it! He tried to replace the string, but that was a failure. So he opened the box to get full satisfaction for his iniquity, and saw a most beautiful Star that shone and winked, and was altogether lovely and desirable.

"Vat," said His Majesty meditatively, "is a 'parkle cwown, like what I will wear when I go to heaven. I will wear it on my head — Miss Biddums says so. I would like to wear it *now*. I would like to play wiv it. I will take it away and play wiv it, very careful, until Mamma asks for it. I fink it was bought for me to play wiv — same as my cart."

His Majesty the King was arguing against his conscience, and he knew it, for he thought imme-

diately after: "Never mind, I will keep it to play wiv until Mamma says where it is, and then I will say — 'I tookt it and I am sorry.' I will not hurt it because it is a 'parkle cwown. But Miss Biddums will tell me to put it back. I will not show it to Miss Biddums."

If Mamma had come in at that moment all would have gone well. She did not, and His Majesty the King stuffed paper, case, and jewel into the breast of his blouse and marched to the nursery.

"When Mamma asks I will tell," was the salve that he laid upon his conscience. But Mamma never asked, and for three whole days His Majesty the King gloated over his treasure. It was of no earthly use to him, but it was splendid, and, for aught he knew, something dropped from the heavens themselves. Still Mamma made no enquiries, and it seemed to him, in his furtive peeps, as though the shiny stones grew dim. What was the use of a 'parkle cwown if it made a little boy feel all bad in his inside? He had the pink string as well as the other treasure, but greatly he wished that he had not gone beyond the string. It was his first experience of iniquity, and it pained him after the flush of possession and secret delight in the "'parkle cwown" had died away.

Each day that he delayed rendered confession to the people beyond the nursery doors more impos-

sible. Now and again he determined to put himself in the path of the beautifully attired lady as she was going out, and explain that he and no one else was the possessor of a "'parkle cwown," most beautiful and quite unenquired for. But she passed hurriedly to her carriage, and the opportunity was gone before His Majesty the King could draw the deep breath which clinches noble resolve. The dread secret cut him off from Miss Biddums, Patsie, and the Commissioner's wife, and — doubly hard fate — when he brooded over it Patsie said, and told her mother, that he was cross.

The days were very long to His Majesty the King and the nights longer still. Miss Biddums had informed him, more than once, what was the ultimate destiny of "fieves," and when he passed the interminable mud flanks of the Central Jail, he shook in his little strapped shoes.

But release came after an afternoon spent in playing boats by the edge of the tank at the bottom of the garden. His Majesty the King went to tea, and, for the first time in his memory, the meal revolted him. His nose was very cold, and his cheeks were burning hot. There was a weight about his feet, and he pressed his head several times to make sure that it was not swelling as he sat.

"I feel vevy funny," said His Majesty the King, rubbing his nose. "Vere's a buzz-buzz in my head."

He went to bed quietly. Miss Biddums was out, and the bearer undressed him.

The sin of the "'parkle cwown" was forgotten in the acuteness of the discomfort to which he roused after a leaden sleep of some hours. He was thirsty, and the bearer had forgotten to leave the drinking-water. "Miss Biddums! Miss Biddums! I'm so kirsty!"

No answer. Miss Biddums had leave to attend the wedding of a Calcutta schoolmate. His Majesty the King had forgotten that.

"I want a dwink of water!" he cried, but his voice was dried up in his throat. "I want a dwink! Vere is ve glass?"

He sat up in bed and looked round. There was a murmur of voices from the other side of the nursery door. It was better to face the terrible unknown than to choke in the dark. He slipped out of bed, but his feet were strangely wilful, and he reeled once or twice. Then he pushed the door open and staggered — a puffed and purple-faced little figure — into the brilliant light of the dining-room full of pretty ladies.

"I'm vevy hot! I'm vevy uncomfitivle," moaned His Majesty the King, clinging to the portière, "and vere's no water in ve glass, and I'm *so* kirsty. Give me a dwink of water."

An apparition in black and white — His Majesty the King could hardly see distinctly — lifted

him up to the level of the table, and felt his wrists and forehead. The water came, and he drank deeply, his teeth chattering against the edge of the tumbler. Then every one seemed to go away — every one except the huge man in black and white, who carried him back to his bed; the mother and father following. And the sin of the "'parkle cwown" rushed back and took possession of the terrified soul.

"I'm a fief!" he gasped. "I want to tell Miss Biddums vat I'm a fief. Vere is Miss Biddums?"

Miss Biddums had come and was bending over him. "I'm a fief," he whispered. "A fief — like ve men in ve pwison. But I'll tell now. I tookt — I tookt ve 'parkle cwown when ve man that came left it in ve hall. I bwoke ve paper and ve little bwown box, and it looked shiny, and I tookt it to play wif, and I was afwaid. It's in ve dooly-box, at ve bottom. No one *never* asked for it, but I was afwaid. Oh, go an' get ve dooly-box!"

Miss Biddums obediently stooped to the lowest shelf of the almirah and unearthed the big paper box in which His Majesty the King kept his dearest possessions. Under the tin soldiers, and a layer of mud pellets for a pellet-bow, winked and blazed a diamond star, wrapped roughly in a half-sheet of notepaper whereon were a few words.

Somebody was crying at the head of the bed,

and a man's hand touched the forehead of His Majesty the King, who grasped the packet and spread it on the bed.

"Vat is ve 'parkle cwown," he said, and wept bitterly; for now that he had made restitution he would fain have kept the shining splendour with him.

"It concerns you too," said a voice at the head of the bed. "Read the note. This is not the time to keep back anything."

The note was curt, very much to the point, and signed by a single initial. "*If you wear this to-morrow night I shall know what to expect.*" The date was three weeks old.

A whisper followed, and the deeper voice returned: "And you drifted as far apart as *that!* I think it makes us quits now, doesn't it? Oh, can't we drop this folly once and for all? Is it worth it, darling?"

"Kiss me too," said His Majesty the King dreamily. "You isn't *vevy* angwy, is you?"

The fever burned itself out, and His Majesty the King slept.

When he waked, it was in a new world—peopled by his father and mother as well as Miss Biddums: and there was much love in that world and no morsel of fear, and more petting than was good for several little boys. His Majesty the King was too young to moralise on the uncer-

tainty of things human, or he would have been impressed with the singular advantages of crime —ay, black sin. Behold, he had stolen the "'parkle cwown," and his reward was Love, and the right to play in the waste-paper basket under the table "for always."

. . . . . .

He trotted over to spend an afternoon with Patsie, and the Commissioner's wife would have kissed him. "No, not vere," said His Majesty the King, with superb insolence, fencing one corner of his mouth with his hand. "Vat's my Mamma's place — vere *she* kisses me."

"Oh!" said the Commissioner's wife briefly. Then to herself: "Well, I suppose I ought to be glad for his sake. Children are selfish little grubs, and—I've got my Patsie."

BAA BAA, BLACK SHEEP

Baa Baa, Black Sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes, Sir, yes, Sir, three bags full.
One for the Master, one for the Dame —
None for the Little Boy that cries down the lane.
Nursery Rhyme.

The First Bag

When I was in my father's house, I was in a better place.

They were putting Punch to bed — the *ayah* and the *hamal* and Meeta, the big *Surti* boy with the red and gold turban. Judy, already tucked inside her mosquito-curtains, was nearly asleep. Punch had been allowed to stay up for dinner. Many privileges had been accorded to Punch within the last ten days, and a greater kindness from the people of his world had encompassed his ways and works, which were mostly obstreperous. He sat on the edge of his bed and swung his bare legs defiantly.

"Punch-*baba* going to bye-lo?" said the *ayah* suggestively.

"No," said Punch. "Punch-*baba* wants the story about the Ranee that was turned into a tiger. Meeta must tell it, and the *hamal* shall hide behind the door and make tiger-noises at the proper time."

"But Judy-*baba* will wake up," said the *ayah*.

"Judy-*baba* is waked," piped a small voice from the mosquito-curtains. "There was a Ranee that lived at Delhi. Go on, Meeta," and she fell fast asleep again while Meeta began the story.

Never had Punch secured the telling of that tale with so little opposition. He reflected for a long time. The *hamal* made the tiger-noises in twenty different keys.

"'Top!" said Punch authoritatively. "Why doesn't Papa come in and say he is going to give me *put-put?*"

"Punch-*baba* is going away," said the *ayah*. "In another week there will be no Punch-*baba* to pull my hair any more." She sighed softly, for the boy of the household was very dear to her heart.

"Up the Ghauts in a train?" said Punch, standing on his bed. "All the way to Nassick where the Ranee-Tiger lives?"

"Not to Nassick this year, little Sahib," said Meeta, lifting him on his shoulder. "Down to the sea where the cocoanuts are thrown, and across the sea in a big ship. Will you take Meeta with you to *Belait?*"

"You shall all come," said Punch, from the height of Meeta's strong arms. "Meeta and the *ayah* and the *hamal* and Bhini-in-the-Garden, and the salaam-Captain-Sahib-snake-man."

There was no mockery in Meeta's voice when he replied—"Great is the Sahib's favour," and laid the little man down in the bed, while the *ayah*, sitting in the moonlight at the doorway, lulled him to sleep with an interminable canticle such as they sing in the Roman Catholic Church at Parel. Punch curled himself into a ball and slept.

Next morning Judy shouted that there was a rat in the nursery, and thus he forgot to tell her the wonderful news. It did not much matter, for Judy was only three and she would not have understood. But Punch was five; and he knew that going to England would be much nicer than a trip to Nassick.

. . . . . .

Papa and Mamma sold the brougham and the piano, and stripped the house, and curtailed the allowance of crockery for the daily meals, and took long council together over a bundle of letters bearing the Rocklington postmark.

"The worst of it is that one can't be certain of anything," said Papa, pulling his moustache. "The letters in themselves are excellent, and the terms are moderate enough."

"The worst of it is that the children will grow up away from me," thought Mamma: but she did not say it aloud.

"We are only one case among hundreds," said Papa bitterly. "You shall go Home again in five years, dear."

"Punch will be ten then — and Judy eight. Oh, how long and long and long the time will be! And we have to leave them among strangers."

"Punch is a cheery little chap. He's sure to make friends wherever he goes."

"And who could help loving my Ju?"

They were standing over the cots in the nursery late at night, and I think that Mamma was crying softly. After Papa had gone away, she knelt down by the side of Judy's cot. The *ayah* saw her and put up a prayer that the Memsahib might never find the love of her children taken away from her and given to a stranger.

Mamma's own prayer was a slightly illogical one. Summarised it ran: "Let strangers love my children and be as good to them as I should be, but let *me* preserve their love and their confidence for ever and ever. Amen." Punch scratched himself in his sleep, and Judy moaned a little.

Next day they all went down to the sea, and there was a scene at the Apollo Bunder when Punch discovered that Meeta could not come too, and Judy learned that the *ayah* must be left behind.

But Punch found a thousand fascinating things in the rope, block, and steam-pipe line on the big P. and O. steamer long before Meeta and the *ayah* had dried their tears.

"Come back, Punch-*baba*," said the *ayah*.

"Come back," said Meeta, "and be a *Burra Sahib*" (a big man).

"Yes," said Punch, lifted up in his father's arms to wave good-bye. "Yes, I will come back, and I will be a *Burra Sahib Bahadur!*" (a very big man indeed).

At the end of the first day Punch demanded to be set down in England, which he was certain must be close at hand. Next day there was a merry breeze, and Punch was very sick. "When I come back to Bombay," said Punch on his recovery, "I will come by the road — in a broom-*gharri*. This is a very naughty ship."

The Swedish boatswain consoled him, and he modified his opinions as the voyage went on. There was so much tc see and to handle and ask questions about that Punch nearly forgot the *ayah* and Meeta and the *hamal*, and with difficulty remembered a few words of the Hindustani, once his second-speech.

But Judy was much worse. The day before the steamer reached Southampton, Mamma asked her if she would not like to see the *ayah* again. Judy's blue eyes turned to the stretch of sea that

had swallowed all her tiny past, and said: "*Ayah!* What *ayah?*"

Mamma cried over her, and Punch marvelled. It was then that he heard for the first time Mamma's passionate appeal to him never to let Judy forget Mamma. Seeing that Judy was young, ridiculously young, and that Mamma, every evening for four weeks past, had come into the cabin to sing her and Punch to sleep with a mysterious rune that he called "Sonny, my soul," Punch could not understand what Mamma meant. But he strove to do his duty; for, the moment Mamma left the cabin, he said to Judy, "Ju, you bemember Mamma?"

"'Torse I do," said Judy.

"Then *always* bemember Mamma, 'r else I won't give you the paper ducks that the red-haired Captain Sahib cut out for me."

So Judy promised always to "bemember Mamma."

Many and many a time was Mamma's command laid upon Punch, and Papa would say the same thing with an insistence that awed the child.

"You must make haste and learn to write, Punch," said Papa, "and then you'll be able to write letters to us in Bombay."

"I'll come into your room," said Punch, and Papa choked.

Papa and Mamma were always choking in those

days. If Punch took Judy to task for not "bemembering," they choked. If Punch sprawled on the sofa in the Southampton lodging-house and sketched his future in purple and gold, they choked; and so they did if Judy put her mouth up for a kiss.

Through many days all four were vagabonds on the face of the earth — Punch with no one to give orders to, Judy too young for anything, and Papa and Mamma grave, distracted, and choking.

"Where," demanded Punch, wearied of a loathsome contrivance on four wheels with a mound of luggage atop —"*where* is our broom-*gharri?* This thing talks so much that *I* can't talk. Where is our *own* broom-*gharri?* When I was at Bandstand before we comed away, I asked Inverarity Sahib why he was sitting in it, and he said it was his own. And I said, 'I will *give* it you,' — I like Inverarity Sahib,— and I said, 'Can you put your legs through the pully-wag loops by the windows?' And Inverarity Sahib said No, and laughed. *I* can put my legs through the pully-wag loops. I can put my legs through *these* pully-wag loops. Look! Oh, Mamma's crying again! I didn't know I wasn't not to do *so*."

Punch drew his legs out of the loops of the four-wheeler; the door opened, and he slid to the earth, in a cascade of parcels, at the door of an austere little villa whose gates bore the legend

"Downe Lodge." Punch gathered himself together and eyed the house with disfavour. It stood on a sandy road, and a cold wind tickled his knickerbockered legs.

"Let us go away," said Punch. "This is not a pretty place."

But Mamma and Papa and Judy had left the cab, and all the luggage was being taken into the house. At the doorstep stood a woman in black, and she smiled largely, with dry, chapped lips. Behind her was a man, big, bony, gray, and lame as to one leg — behind him a boy of twelve, black-haired and oily in appearance. Punch surveyed the trio, and advanced without fear, as he had been accustomed to do in Bombay when callers came and he happened to be playing in the verandah.

"How do you do?" said he. "I am Punch." But they were all looking at the luggage — all except the gray man, who shook hands with Punch, and said he was "a smart little fellow." There was much running about and banging of boxes, and Punch curled himself up on the sofa in the dining-room and considered things.

"I don't like these people," said Punch. "But never mind. We'll go away soon. We have always went away soon from everywhere. I wish we was gone back to Bombay *soon*."

The wish bore no fruit. For six days Mamma

wept at intervals, and showed the woman in black all Punch's clothes — a liberty which Punch resented. "But p'raps she's a new white *ayah*," he thought. "I'm to call her Antirosa, but she doesn't call *me* Sahib. She says just Punch," he confided to Judy. "What is Antirosa?"

Judy didn't know. Neither she nor Punch had heard anything of an animal called an aunt. Their world had been Papa and Mamma, who knew everything, permitted everything, and loved everybody — even Punch when he used to go into the garden at Bombay and fill his nails with mould after the weekly nail-cutting, because, as he explained between two strokes of the slipper to his sorely tried Father, his fingers "felt so new at the ends."

In an undefined way Punch judged it advisable to keep both parents between himself and the woman in black and the boy in black hair. He did not approve of them. He liked the gray man, who had expressed a wish to be called "Uncleharri." They nodded at each other when they met, and the gray man showed him a little ship with rigging that took up and down.

"She is a model of the *Brisk* — the little *Brisk* that was sore exposed that day at Navarino." The gray man hummed the last words and fell into a reverie. "I'll tell you about Navarino, Punch, when we go for walks together; and

you mustn't touch the ship, because she's the *Brisk*."

Long before that walk, the first of many, was taken, they roused Punch and Judy in the chill dawn of a February morning to say Good-bye; and, of all people in the wide earth, to Papa and Mamma — both crying this time. Punch was very sleepy and Judy was cross.

"Don't forget us," pleaded Mamma. "Oh, my little son, don't forget us, and see that Judy remembers too."

"I've told Judy to bemember," said Punch, wriggling, for his father's beard tickled his neck. "I've told Judy — ten — forty — 'leven thousand times. But Ju's so young — quite a baby — isn't she?"

"Yes," said Papa, "quite a baby, and you must be good to Judy, and make haste to learn to write and — and — and ——"

Punch was back in his bed again. Judy was fast asleep, and there was the rattle of a cab below. Papa and Mamma had gone away. Not to Nassick; that was across the sea. To some place much nearer, of course, and equally of course they would return. They came back after dinner-parties, and Papa had come back after he had been to a place called "The Snows," and Mamma with him, to Punch and Judy at Mrs. Inverarity's house in Marine Lines. Assuredly they would

come back again. So Punch fell asleep till the true morning, when the black-haired boy met him with the information that Papa and Mamma had gone to Bombay, and that he and Judy were to stay at Downe Lodge "for ever." Antirosa, tearfully appealed to for a contradiction, said that Harry had spoken the truth, and that it behooved Punch to fold up his clothes neatly on going to bed. Punch went out and wept bitterly with Judy, into whose fair head he had driven some ideas of the meaning of separation.

When a matured man discovers that he has been deserted by Providence, deprived of his God, and cast, without help, comfort, or sympathy, upon a world which is new and strange to him, his despair, which may find expression in evil-living, the writing of his experiences, or the more satisfactory diversion of suicide, is generally supposed to be impressive. A child, under exactly similar circumstances as far as its knowledge goes, cannot very well curse God and die. It howls till its nose is red, its eyes are sore, and its head aches. Punch and Judy, through no fault of their own, had lost all their world. They sat in the hall and cried; the black-haired boy looking on from afar.

The model of the ship availed nothing, though the gray man assured Punch that he might pull the rigging up and down as much as he pleased;

and Judy was promised free entry into the kitchen. They wanted Papa and Mamma gone to Bombay beyond the seas, and their grief while it lasted was without remedy.

When the tears ceased the house was very still. Antirosa had decided that it was better to let the children "have their cry out," and the boy had gone to school. Punch raised his head from the floor and sniffed mournfully. Judy was nearly asleep. Three short years had not taught her how to bear sorrow with full knowledge. There was a distant, dull boom in the air — a repeated heavy thud. Punch knew that sound in Bombay in the Monsoon. It was the sea — the sea that must be traversed before any one could get to Bombay.

"Quick, Ju!" he cried, "we're close to the sea. I can hear it! Listen! That's where they've went. P'raps we can catch them if we was in time. They didn't mean to go without us. They've only forgot."

"Iss," said Judy. "They've only forgotted. Less go to the sea."

The hall-door was open, and so was the garden-gate.

"It's very, very big, this place," he said, looking cautiously down the road, "and we will get lost; but *I* will find a man and order him to take me back to my house — like I did in Bombay."

He took Judy by the hand, and the two ran

hatless in the direction of the sound of the sea. Downe Villa was almost the last of a range of newly-built houses running out, through a field of brick-mounds, to a heath where gypsies occasionally camped and where the Garrison Artillery of Rocklington practised. There were few people to be seen, and the children might have been taken for those of the soldiery who ranged far. Half an hour the wearied little legs tramped across heath, potato-patch, and sand-dune.

"I'se so tired," said Judy, "and Mamma will be angry."

"Mamma's *never* angry. I suppose she is waiting at the sea now while Papa gets tickets. We'll find them and go along with. Ju, you mustn't sit down. Only a little more and we'll come to the sea. Ju, if you sit down I'll *thmack* you!" said Punch.

They climbed another dune, and came upon the great gray sea at low tide. Hundreds of crabs were scuttling about the beach, but there was no trace of Papa and Mamma, not even of a ship upon the waters — nothing but sand and mud for miles and miles.

And "Uncleharri" found them by chance — very muddy and very forlorn — Punch dissolved in tears, but trying to divert Judy with an "ickle trab," and Judy wailing to the pitiless horizon for "Mamma, Mamma!" — and again "Mamma!"

The Second Bag

> Ah, well-a-day, for we are souls bereaved!
> Of all the creatures under Heaven's wide scope
> We are most hopeless, who had once most hope,
> And most beliefless, who had most believed.
>
> *The City of Dreadful Night.*

All this time not a word about Black Sheep. He came later, and Harry the black-haired boy was mainly responsible for his coming.

Judy — who could help loving little Judy? — passed, by special permit, into the kitchen, and thence straight to Aunty Rosa's heart. Harry was Aunty Rosa's one child, and Punch was the extra boy about the house. There was no special place for him or his little affairs, and he was forbidden to sprawl on sofas and explain his ideas about the manufacture of this world and his hopes for his future. Sprawling was lazy and wore out sofas, and little boys were not expected to talk. They were talked to, and the talking to was intended for the benefit of their morals. As the unquestioned despot of the house at Bombay, Punch could not quite understand how he came to be of no account in this his new life.

Harry might reach across the table and take what he wanted; Judy might point and get what she wanted. Punch was forbidden to do either.

The gray man was his great hope and stand-by for many months after Mamma and Papa left, and he had forgotten to tell Judy to "bemember Mamma."

This lapse was excusable, because in the interval he had been introduced by Aunty Rosa to two very impressive things — an abstraction called God, the intimate friend and ally of Aunty Rosa, generally believed to live behind the kitchen range because it was hot there — and a dirty brown book filled with unintelligible dots and marks. Punch was always anxious to oblige everybody. He therefore welded the story of the Creation on to what he could recollect of his Indian fairy tales, and scandalised Aunty Rosa by repeating the result to Judy. It was a sin, a grievous sin, and Punch was talked to for a quarter of an hour. He could not understand where the iniquity came in, but was careful not to repeat the offence, because Aunty Rosa told him that God had heard every word he had said and was very angry. If this were true, why didn't God come and say so, thought Punch, and dismissed the matter from his mind. Afterwards he learned to know the Lord as the only thing in the world more awful than Aunty Rosa — as a Creature that stood in the background and counted the strokes of the cane.

But the reading was, just then, a much more

serious matter than any creed. Aunty Rosa sat him upon a table and told him that A B meant ab.

"Why?" said Punch. "A is a and B is bee. *Why* does A B mean ab?"

"Because I tell you it does," said Aunty Rosa, "and you've got to say it."

Punch said it accordingly, and for a month, hugely against his will, stumbled through the brown book, not in the least comprehending what it meant. But Uncle Harry, who walked much and generally alone, was wont to come into the nursery and suggest to Aunty Rosa that Punch should walk with him. He seldom spoke, but he showed Punch all Rocklington, from the mud-banks and the sand of the back-bay to the great harbours where ships lay at anchor, and the dockyards where the hammers were never still, and the marine-store shops, and the shiny brass counters in the Offices where Uncle Harry went once every three months with a slip of blue paper and received sovereigns in exchange; for he held a wound-pension. Punch heard, too, from his lips the story of the battle of Navarino, where the sailors of the Fleet, for three days afterwards, were deaf as posts and could only sign to each other. "That was because of the noise of the guns," said Uncle Harry, "and I have got the wadding of a bullet somewhere inside me now."

Punch regarded him with curiosity. He had not the least idea what wadding was, and his no-

tion of a bullet was a dockyard cannon-ball bigger than his own head. How could Uncle Harry keep a cannon-ball inside him? He was ashamed to ask, for fear Uncle Harry might be angry.

Punch had never known what anger — real anger — meant until one terrible day when Harry had taken his paint-box to paint a boat with, and Punch had protested. Then Uncle Harry had appeared on the scene and, muttering something about "strangers' children," had with a stick smitten the black-haired boy across the shoulders till he wept and yelled, and Aunty Rosa came in and abused Uncle Harry for cruelty to his own flesh and blood, and Punch shuddered to the tips of his shoes. "It wasn't my fault," he explained to the boy, but both Harry and Aunty Rosa said that it was, and that Punch had told tales, and for a week there were no more walks with Uncle Harry.

But that week brought a great joy to Punch.

He had repeated till he was thrice weary the statement that "the Cat lay on the Mat and the Rat came in."

"Now I can truly read," said Punch, "and now I will never read anything in the world."

He put the brown book in the cupboard where his school-books lived, and accidentally tumbled out a venerable volume, without covers, labelled "Sharpe's Magazine." There was the most por-

tentous picture of a griffin on the first page, with verses below. The griffin carried off one sheep a day from a German village, till a man came with a "falchion" and split the griffin open. Goodness only knew what a falchion was, but there was the Griffin, and his history was an improvement upon the eternal Cat.

"This," said Punch, "means things, and now I will know all about everything in all the world." He read till the light failed, not understanding a tithe of the meaning, but tantalised by glimpses of new worlds hereafter to be revealed.

"What is a 'falchion'? What is a 'e-wee lamb'? What is a 'base *uss*urper'? What is a 'verdant me-ad'?" he demanded with flushed cheeks, at bedtime, of the astonished Aunty Rosa.

"Say your prayers and go to sleep," she replied, and that was all the help Punch then or afterwards found at her hands in the new and delightful exercise of reading.

"Aunty Rosa only knows about God and things like that," argued Punch. "Uncle Harry will tell me."

The next walk proved that Uncle Harry could not help either; but he allowed Punch to talk, and even sat down on a bench to hear about the Griffin. Other walks brought other stories as Punch ranged further afield, for the house held

large store of old books that no one ever opened — from "Frank Fairlegh" in serial numbers, and the earlier poems of Tennyson, contributed anonymously to "Sharpe's Magazine," to '62 Exhibition Catalogues, gay with colours and delightfully incomprehensible, and odd leaves of "Gulliver's Travels."

As soon as Punch could string a few pot-hooks together, he wrote to Bombay, demanding by return of post "all the books in all the world." Papa could not comply with this modest indent, but sent "Grimm's Fairy Tales" and a Hans Andersen. That was enough. If he were only left alone, Punch could pass, at any hour he chose, into a land of his own, beyond reach of Aunty Rosa and her God, Harry and his teasements, and Judy's claims to be played with.

"Don't disturve me, I'm reading. Go and play in the kitchen," grunted Punch. "Aunty Rosa lets *you* go there." Judy was cutting her second teeth and was fretful. She appealed to Aunty Rosa, who descended on Punch.

"I was reading," he explained, "reading a book. I *want* to read."

"You're only doing that to show off," said Aunty Rosa. "But we'll see. Play with Judy now, and don't open a book for a week."

Judy did not pass a very enjoyable playtime with Punch, who was consumed with indignation.

There was a pettiness at the bottom of the prohibition which puzzled him.

"It's what I like to do," he said, "and she's found out that and stopped me. Don't cry, Ju — it wasn't your fault — *please* don't cry, or she'll say I made you."

Ju loyally mopped up her tears, and the two played in their nursery, a room in the basement and half underground, to which they were regularly sent after the midday dinner while Aunty Rosa slept. She drank wine — that is to say, something from a bottle in the cellaret — for her stomach's sake, but if she did not fall asleep she would sometimes come into the nursery to see that the children were really playing. Now bricks, wooden hoops, ninepins, and chinaware cannot amuse for ever, especially when all Fairyland is to be won by the mere opening of a book, and, as often as not, Punch would be discovered reading to Judy or telling her interminable tales. That was an offence in the eyes of the law, and Judy would be whisked off by Aunty Rosa, while Punch was left to play alone, "and be sure that I hear you doing it."

It was not a cheering employ, for he had to make a playful noise. At last, with infinite craft, he devised an arrangement whereby the table could be supported as to three legs on toy bricks, leaving the fourth clear to bring down on the

floor. He could work the table with one hand and hold a book with the other. This he did till an evil day when Aunty Rosa pounced upon him unawares and told him that he was "acting a lie."

"If you're old enough to do that," she said — her temper was always worst after dinner — "you're old enough to be beaten."

"But — I'm — I'm not a animal!" said Punch, aghast. He remembered Uncle Harry and the stick, and turned white. Aunty Rosa had hidden a light cane behind her, and Punch was beaten then and there over the shoulders. It was a revelation to him. The room-door was shut, and he was left to weep himself into repentance and work out his own gospel of life.

Aunty Rosa, he argued, had the power to beat him with many stripes. It was unjust and cruel, and Mamma and Papa would never have allowed it. Unless perhaps, as Aunty Rosa seemed to imply, they had sent secret orders. In which case he was abandoned indeed. It would be discreet in the future to propitiate Aunty Rosa, but then, again, even in matters in which he was innocent, he had been accused of wishing to "show off." He had "shown off" before visitors when he had attacked a strange gentleman — Harry's uncle, not his own — with requests for information about the Griffin and the falchion, and the precise nature of the Tilbury in which Frank Fairlegh rode —

all points of paramount interest which he was bursting to understand. Clearly it would not do to pretend to care for Aunty Rosa.

At this point Harry entered and stood afar off, eying Punch, a dishevelled heap in the corner of the room, with disgust.

"You're a liar — a young liar," said Harry, with great unction, "and you're to have tea down here because you're not fit to speak to us. And you're not to speak to Judy again till Mother gives you leave. You'll corrupt her. You're only fit to associate with the servant. Mother says so."

Having reduced Punch to a second agony of tears, Harry departed upstairs with the news that Punch was still rebellious.

Uncle Harry sat uneasily in the dining-room. "Damn it all, Rosa," said he at last, "can't you leave the child alone? He's a good enough little chap when I meet him."

"He puts on his best manners with you, Henry," said Aunty Rosa, "but I'm afraid, I'm very much afraid, that he is the Black Sheep of the family."

Harry heard and stored up the name for future use. Judy cried till she was bidden to stop, her brother not being worth tears; and the evening concluded with the return of Punch to the upper regions and a private sitting at which all the blind-

ing horrors of Hell were revealed to Punch with such store of imagery as Aunty Rosa's narrow mind possessed.

Most grievous of all was Judy's round-eyed reproach, and Punch went to bed in the depths of the Valley of Humiliation. He shared his room with Harry, and knew the torture in store. For an hour and a half he had to answer that young gentleman's questions as to his motives for telling a lie, and a grievous lie, the precise quantity of punishment inflicted by Aunty Rosa, and had also to profess his deep gratitude for such religious instruction as Harry thought fit to impart.

From that day began the downfall of Punch, now Black Sheep.

"Untrustworthy in one thing, untrustworthy in all," said Aunty Rosa, and Harry felt that Black Sheep was delivered into his hands. He would wake him up in the night to ask him why he was such a liar.

"I don't know," Punch would reply.

"Then don't you think you ought to get up and pray to God for a new heart?"

"Y-yess."

"Get out and pray, then!" And Punch would get out of bed with raging hate in his heart against all the world, seen and unseen. He was always tumbling into trouble. Harry had a knack of cross-examining him as to his day's doings, which

seldom failed to lead him, sleepy and savage, into half a dozen contradictions — all duly reported to Aunty Rosa next morning.

"But it *wasn't* a lie," Punch would begin, charging into a laboured explanation that landed him more hopelessly in the mire. "I said that I didn't say my prayers *twice* over in the day, and *that* was on Tuesday. *Once* I did. I *know* I did, but Harry said I didn't," and so forth, till the tension brought tears, and he was dismissed from the table in disgrace.

"You usen't to be as bad as this," said Judy, awe-stricken at the catalogue of Black Sheep's crimes. "Why are you so bad now?"

"I don't know," Black Sheep would reply. "I'm not, if I only wasn't bothered upside down. I knew what I *did*, and I want to say so; but Harry always makes it out different somehow, and Aunty Rosa doesn't believe a word I say. Oh, Ju! don't *you* say I'm bad too."

"Aunty Rosa says you are," said Judy. "She told the Vicar so when he came yesterday."

"Why does she tell all the people outside the house about me? It isn't fair," said Black Sheep. "When I was in Bombay, and was bad — *doing* bad, not made-up bad like this — Mamma told Papa, and Papa told me he knew, and that was all. *Outside* people didn't know too — even Meeta didn't know."

"I don't remember," said Judy wistfully. "I was all little then. Mamma was just as fond of you as she was of me, wasn't she?"

"'Course she was. So was Papa. So was everybody."

"Aunty Rosa likes me more than she does you. She says that you are a Trial and a Black Sheep, and I'm not to speak to you more than I can help."

"Always? Not outside of the times when you mustn't speak to me at all?"

Judy nodded her head mournfully. Black Sheep turned away in despair, but Judy's arms were round his neck.

"Never mind, Punch," she whispered. "I *will* speak to you just the same as ever and ever. You're my own own brother, though you are — though Aunty Rosa says you're Bad, and Harry says you're a little coward. He says that if I pulled your hair hard, you'd cry."

"Pull, then," said Punch.

Judy pulled gingerly.

"Pull harder — as hard as you can! There! I don't mind how much you pull it *now*. If you'll speak to me same as ever I'll let you pull it as much as you like — pull it out if you like. But I know if Harry came and stood by and made you do it, I'd cry."

So the two children sealed the compact with a

kiss, and Black Sheep's heart was cheered within him, and by extreme caution and careful avoidance of Harry he acquired virtue, and was allowed to read undisturbed for a week. Uncle Harry took him for walks, and consoled him with rough tenderness, never calling him Black Sheep. "It's good for you, I suppose, Punch," he used to say. "Let us sit down. I'm getting tired." His steps led him now not to the beach, but to the Cemetery of Rocklington, amid the potato-fields. For hours the gray man would sit on a tombstone, while Black Sheep read epitaphs, and then with a sigh would stump home again.

"I shall lie there soon," said he to Black Sheep, one winter evening, when his face showed white as a worn silver coin under the light of the lych-gate. "You needn't tell Aunty Rosa."

A month later, he turned sharp round, ere half a morning walk was completed, and stumped back to the house. "Put me to bed, Rosa," he muttered. "I've walked my last. The wadding has found me out."

They put him to bed, and for a fortnight the shadow of his sickness lay upon the house, and Black Sheep went to and fro unobserved. Papa had sent him some new books, and he was told to keep quiet. He retired into his own world, and was perfectly happy. Even at night his felicity was unbroken. He could lie in bed and string him-

self tales of travel and adventure while Harry was downstairs.

"Uncle Harry's going to die," said Judy, who now lived almost entirely with Aunty Rosa.

"I'm very sorry," said Black Sheep soberly. "He told me that a long time ago."

Aunty Rosa heard the conversation. "Will nothing check your wicked tongue?" she said angrily. There were blue circles round her eyes.

Black Sheep retreated to the nursery and read "Cometh up as a Flower" with deep and uncomprehending interest. He had been forbidden to open it on account of its "sinfulness," but the bonds of the Universe were crumbling, and Aunty Rosa was in great grief.

"I'm glad," said Black Sheep. "She's unhappy now. It wasn't a lie, though. *I* knew. He told me not to tell."

That night Black Sheep woke with a start. Harry was not in the room, and there was a sound of sobbing on the next floor. Then the voice of Uncle Harry, singing the song of the Battle of Navarino, came through the darkness: —

> "Our vanship was the Asia —
> The Albion and Genoa!"

"He's getting well," thought Black Sheep, who knew the song through all its seventeen verses.

But the blood froze at his little heart as he thought. The voice leapt an octave, and rang shrill as a boatswain's pipe: —

> "And next came on the lovely Rose,
> The Philomel, her fire-ship, closed,
> And the little Brisk was sore exposed
> That day at Navarino."

"That day at Navarino, Uncle Harry!" shouted Black Sheep, half wild with excitement and fear of he knew not what.

A door opened, and Aunty Rosa screamed up the staircase: "Hush! For God's sake hush, you little devil. Uncle Harry is *dead!*"

The Third Bag

> Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
> Every wise man's son doth know.

"I wonder what will happen to me now," thought Black Sheep, when semi-pagan rites peculiar to the burial of the Dead in middle-class houses had been accomplished, and Aunty Rosa, awful in black crape, had returned to this life. "I don't think I've done anything bad that she knows of. I suppose I will soon. She will be very cross after Uncle Harry's dying, and Harry will be cross too. I'll keep in the nursery."

Unfortunately for Punch's plans, it was decided that he should be sent to a day-school which Harry attended. This meant a morning walk with Harry, and perhaps an evening one; but the prospect of freedom in the interval was refreshing. "Harry'll tell everything I do, but I won't do anything," said Black Sheep. Fortified with this virtuous resolution, he went to school only to find that Harry's version of his character had preceded him, and that life was a burden in consequence. He took stock of his associates. Some of them were unclean, some of them talked in dialect, many dropped their h's, and there were two Jews and a negro, or some one quite as dark, in the assembly. "That's a *hubshi*," said Black Sheep to himself. "Even Meeta used to laugh at a *hubshi*. I don't think this is a proper place." He was indignant for at least an hour, till he reflected that any expostulation on his part would be by Aunty Rosa construed into "showing off," and that Harry would tell the boys.

"How do you like school?" said Aunty Rosa at the end of the day.

"I think it is a very nice place," said Punch quietly.

"I suppose you warned the boys of Black Sheep's character?" said Aunty Rosa to Harry.

"Oh, yes," said the censor of Black Sheep's morals. "They know all about him."

"If I was with my father," said Black Sheep, stung to the quick, "I shouldn't *speak* to those boys. He wouldn't let me. They live in shops. I saw them go into shops — where their fathers live and sell things."

"You're too good for that school, are you?" said Aunty Rosa, with a bitter smile. "You ought to be grateful, Black Sheep, that those boys speak to you at all. It isn't every school that takes little liars."

Harry did not fail to make much capital out of Black Sheep's ill-considered remark; with the result that several boys, including the *hubshi*, demonstrated to Black Sheep the eternal equality of the human race by smacking his head, and his consolation from Aunty Rosa was that it "served him right for being vain." He learned, however, to keep his opinions to himself, and by propitiating Harry in carrying books and the like to get a little peace. His existence was not too joyful. From nine till twelve he was at school, and from two to four, except on Saturdays. In the evenings he was sent down into the nursery to prepare his lessons for the next day, and every night came the dreaded cross-questionings at Harry's hand. Of Judy he saw but little. She was deeply religious — at six years of age Religion is easy to come by — and sorely divided between her natural love for Black Sheep and her love for Aunty Rosa, who could do no wrong.

The lean woman returned that love with interest, and Judy, when she dared, took advantage of this for the remission of Black Sheep's penalties. Failures in lessons at school were punished at home by a week without reading other than school-books, and Harry brought the news of such a failure with glee. Further, Black Sheep was then bound to repeat his lessons at bedtime to Harry, who generally succeeded in making him break down, and consoled him by gloomiest forebodings for the morrow. Harry was at once spy, practical joker, inquisitor, and Aunty Rosa's deputy executioner. He filled his many posts to admiration. From his actions, now that Uncle Harry was dead, there was no appeal. Black Sheep had not been permitted to keep any self-respect at school: at home he was of course utterly discredited, and grateful for any pity that the servant-girls — they changed frequently at Downe Lodge because they, too, were liars — might show. "You're just fit to row in the same boat with Black Sheep," was a sentiment that each new Jane or Eliza might expect to hear, before a month was over, from Aunty Rosa's lips; and Black Sheep was used to ask new girls whether they had yet been compared to him. Harry was "Master Harry" in their mouths; Judy was officially "Miss Judy"; but Black Sheep was never anything more than Black Sheep *tout court.*

As time went on and the memory of Papa and Mamma became wholly overlaid by the unpleasant task of writing them letters, under Aunty Rosa's eye, each Sunday, Black Sheep forgot what manner of life he had led in the beginning of things. Even Judy's appeals to "try and remember about Bombay" failed to quicken him.

"I can't remember," he said. "I know I used to give orders and Mamma kissed me."

"Aunty Rosa will kiss you if you are good," pleaded Judy.

"Ugh! I don't want to be kissed by Aunty Rosa. She'd say I was doing it to get something more to eat."

The weeks lengthened into months, and the holidays came; but just before the holidays Black Sheep fell into deadly sin.

Among the many boys whom Harry had incited to "punch Black Sheep's head because he daren't hit back" was one, more aggravating than the rest, who, in an unlucky moment, fell upon Black Sheep when Harry was not near. The blows stung, and Black Sheep struck back at random with all the power at his command. The boy dropped and whimpered. Black Sheep was astounded at his own act, but, feeling the unresisting body under him, shook it with both his hands in blind fury and then began to throttle his enemy, meaning honestly to slay him. There

was a scuffle, and Black Sheep was torn off the body by Harry and some colleagues, and cuffed home tingling but exultant. Aunty Rosa was out: pending her arrival, Harry set himself to lecture Black Sheep on the sin of murder—which he described as the offence of Cain.

"Why didn't you fight him fair? What did you hit him when he was down for, you little cur?"

Black Sheep looked up at Harry's throat and then at a knife on the dinner-table.

"I don't understand," he said wearily. "You always set him on me and told me I was a coward when I blubbed. Will you leave me alone until Aunty Rosa comes in? She'll beat me if you tell her I ought to be beaten; so it's all right."

"It's all wrong," said Harry magisterially. "You nearly killed him, and I shouldn't wonder if he dies."

"Will he die?" said Black Sheep.

"I dare say," said Harry, "and then you'll be hanged, and go to Hell."

"All right," said Black Sheep, picking up the table-knife. "Then I'll kill *you* now. You say things and do things, and—and *I* don't know how things happen, and you never leave me alone—and I don't care *what* happens!"

He ran at the boy with the knife, and Harry fled upstairs to his room, promising Black Sheep

the finest thrashing in the world when Aunty Rosa returned. Black Sheep sat at the bottom of the stairs, the table-knife in his hand, and wept for that he had not killed Harry. The servant-girl came up from the kitchen, took the knife away, and consoled him. But Black Sheep was beyond consolation. He would be badly beaten by Aunty Rosa; then there would be another beating at Harry's hands; then Judy would not be allowed to speak to him; then the tale would be told at school, and then——

There was no one to help and no one to care, and the best way out of the business was by death. A knife would hurt, but Aunty Rosa had told him, a year ago, that if he sucked paint he would die. He went into the nursery, unearthed the now disused Noah's Ark, and sucked the paint off as many animals as remained. It tasted abominable, but he had licked Noah's Dove clean by the time Aunty Rosa and Judy returned. He went upstairs and greeted them with: "Please, Aunty Rosa, I believe I've nearly killed a boy at school, and I've tried to kill Harry, and when you've done all about God and Hell, will you beat me and get it over?"

The tale of the assault as told by Harry could only be explained on the ground of possession by the Devil. Wherefore Black Sheep was not only most excellently beaten, once by Aunty Rosa and

once, when thoroughly cowed down, by Harry, but he was further prayed for at family prayers, together with Jane, who had stolen a cold rissole from the pantry and snuffled audibly as her sin was brought before the Throne of Grace. Black Sheep was sore and stiff, but triumphant. He would die that very night and be rid of them all. No, he would ask for no forgiveness from Harry, and at bedtime would stand no questioning at Harry's hands, even though addressed as "Young Cain."

"I've been beaten," said he, "and I've done other things. I don't care what I do. If you speak to me to-night, Harry, I'll get out and try to kill you. Now you can kill me if you like."

Harry took his bed into the spare room, and Black Sheep lay down to die.

It may be that the makers of Noah's Arks know that their animals are likely to find their way into young mouths, and paint them accordingly. Certain it is that the common, weary next morning broke through the windows and found Black Sheep quite well and a good deal ashamed of himself, but richer by the knowledge that he could, in extremity, secure himself against Harry for the future.

When he descended to breakfast on the first day of the holidays, he was greeted with the news that Harry, Aunty Rosa, and Judy were going

away to Brighton, while Black Sheep was to stay in the house with the servant. His latest outbreak suited Aunty Rosa's plans admirably. It gave her good excuse for leaving the extra boy behind. Papa in Bombay, who really seemed to know a young sinner's wants to the hour, sent, that week, a package of new books. And with these, and the society of Jane on board-wages, Black Sheep was left alone for a month.

The books lasted for ten days. They were eaten too quickly in long gulps of twelve hours at a time. Then came days of doing absolutely nothing, of dreaming dreams and marching imaginary armies up and down stairs, of counting the number of banisters, and of measuring the length and breadth of every room in handspans — fifty down the side, thirty across, and fifty back again. Jane made many friends, and, after receiving Black Sheep's assurance that he would not tell of her absences, went out daily for long hours. Black Sheep would follow the rays of the sinking sun from the kitchen to the dining-room and thence upward to his own bedroom until all was gray dark, and he ran down to the kitchen fire and read by its light. He was happy in that he was left alone and could read as much as he pleased. But, later, he grew afraid of the shadows of window-curtains and the flapping of doors and the creaking of shutters. He went out into the garden,

and the rustling of the laurel-bushes frightened him.

He was glad when they all returned — Aunty Rosa, Harry, and Judy — full of news, and Judy laden with gifts. Who could help loving loyal little Judy? In return for all her merry babblement, Black Sheep confided to her that the distance from the hall-door to the top of the first landing was exactly one hundred and eighty-four handspans. He had found it out himself.

Then the old life recommenced; but with a difference, and a new sin. To his other iniquities Black Sheep had now added a phenomenal clumsiness — was as unfit to trust in action as he was in word. He himself could not account for spilling everything he touched, upsetting glasses as he put his hand out, and bumping his head against doors that were manifestly shut. There was a gray haze upon all his world, and it narrowed month by month, until at last it left Black Sheep almost alone with the flapping curtains that were so like ghosts, and the nameless terrors of broad daylight that were only coats on pegs after all.

Holidays came and holidays went, and Black Sheep was taken to see many people whose faces were all exactly alike; was beaten when occasion demanded, and tortured by Harry on all possible occasions; but defended by Judy through good

and evil report, though she thereby drew upon herself the wrath of Aunty Rosa.

The weeks were interminable, and Papa and Mamma were clean forgotten. Harry had left school and was a clerk in a Banking-Office. Freed from his presence, Black Sheep resolved that he should no longer be deprived of his allowance of pleasure-reading. Consequently when he failed at school he reported that all was well, and conceived a large contempt for Aunty Rosa as he saw how easy it was to deceive her. "She says I'm a little liar when I don't tell lies, and now I do, she doesn't know," thought Black Sheep. Aunty Rosa had credited him in the past with petty cunning and stratagem that had never entered into his head. By the light of the sordid knowledge that she had revealed to him he paid her back full tale. In a household where the most innocent of his motives, his natural yearning for a little affection, had been interpreted into a desire for more bread and jam or to ingratiate himself with strangers and so put Harry into the background, his work was easy. Aunty Rosa could penetrate certain kinds of hypocrisy, but not all. He set his child's wits against hers, and was no more beaten. It grew monthly more and more of a trouble to read the school-books, and even the pages of the open-print story-books danced and were dim. So Black Sheep brooded in the

shadows that fell about him and cut him off from the world, inventing horrible punishments for "dear Harry," or plotting another line of the tangled web of deception that he wrapped round Aunty Rosa.

Then the crash came and the cobwebs were broken. It was impossible to foresee everything. Aunty Rosa made personal enquiries as to Black Sheep's progress, and received information that startled her. Step by step, with a delight as keen as when she convicted an underfed housemaid of the theft of cold meats, she followed the trail of Black Sheep's delinquencies. For weeks and weeks, in order to escape banishment from the book-shelves, he had made a fool of Aunty Rosa, of Harry, of God, of all the world! Horrible, most horrible, and evidence of an utterly depraved mind.

Black Sheep counted the cost. "It will only be one big beating, and then she'll put a card with 'Liar' on my back, same as she did before. Harry will whack me and pray for me, and she will pray for me at prayers and tell me I'm a Child of the Devil and give me hymns to learn. But I've done all my reading, and she never knew. She'll say she knew all along. She's an old liar too," said he.

For three days Black Sheep was shut in his own bedroom — to prepare his heart. "That means

two beatings. One at school and one here. *That* one will hurt most." And it fell even as he thought. He was thrashed at school before the Jews and the *hubshi*, for the heinous crime of bringing home false reports of progress. He was thrashed at home by Aunty Rosa on the same count, and then the placard was produced. Aunty Rosa stitched it between his shoulders and bade him go for a walk with it upon him.

"If you make me do that," said Black Sheep very quietly, "I shall burn this house down, and perhaps I'll kill you. I don't know whether I *can* kill you—you're so bony—but I'll try."

No punishment followed this blasphemy, though Black Sheep held himself ready to work his way to Aunty Rosa's withered throat, and grip there till he was beaten off. Perhaps Aunty Rosa was afraid, for Black Sheep, having reached the Nadir of Sin, bore himself with a new recklessness.

In the midst of all the trouble there came a visitor from over the seas to Downe Lodge, who knew Papa and Mamma, and was commissioned to see Punch and Judy. Black Sheep was sent to the drawing-room and charged into a solid tea-table laden with china.

"Gently, gently, little man," said the visitor, turning Black Sheep's face to the light slowly, "What's that big bird on the palings?"

"What bird?" asked Black Sheep.

The visitor looked deep down into Black Sheep's eyes for half a minute, and then said suddenly: "Good God, the little chap's nearly blind!"

It was a most business-like visitor. He gave orders, on his own responsibility, that Black Sheep was not to go to school or open a book until Mamma came home. "She 'll be here in three weeks, as you know of course," said he, "and I'm Inverarity Sahib. I ushered you into this wicked world, young man, and a nice use you seem to have made of your time. You must do nothing whatever. Can you do that?"

"Yes," said Punch in a dazed way. He had known that Mamma was coming. There was a chance, then, of another beating. Thank Heaven, Papa wasn't coming too. Aunty Rosa had said of late that he ought to be beaten by a man.

For the next three weeks Black Sheep was strictly allowed to do nothing. He spent his time in the old nursery looking at the broken toys, for all of which account must be rendered to Mamma. Aunty Rosa hit him over the hands if even a wooden boat were broken. But that sin was of small importance compared to the other revelations, so darkly hinted at by Aunty Rosa.

"When your Mother comes, and hears what I have to tell her, she may appreciate you properly," she said grimly, and mounted guard over Judy

lest that small maiden should attempt to comfort her brother, to the peril of her soul.

And Mamma came — in a four-wheeler — fluttered with tender excitement. Such a Mamma! She was young, frivolously young, and beautiful, with delicately flushed cheeks, eyes that shone like stars, and a voice that needed no appeal of outstretched arms to draw little ones to her heart. Judy ran straight to her, but Black Sheep hesitated.

Could this wonder be "showing off"? She would not put out her arms when she knew of his crimes. Meantime was it possible that by fondling she wanted to get anything out of Black Sheep? Only all his love and all his confidence; but that Black Sheep did not know. Aunty Rosa withdrew and left Mamma, kneeling between her children, half laughing, half crying, in the very hall where Punch and Judy had wept five years before.

"Well, Chicks, do you remember me?"

"No," said Judy frankly, "but I said, 'God bless Papa and Mamma,' ev'vy night."

"A little," said Black Sheep. "Remember I wrote to you every week, anyhow. That isn't to show off, but 'cause of what comes afterwards."

"What comes after? What should come after, my darling boy?" And she drew him to her again. He came awkwardly, with many angies.

"Not used to petting," said the quick Mother-soul. "The girl is."

"She's too little to hurt any one," thought Black Sheep, "and if I said I'd kill her, she'd be afraid. I wonder what Aunty Rosa will tell."

There was a constrained late dinner, at the end of which Mamma picked up Judy and put her to bed with endearments manifold. Faithless little Judy had shown her defection from Aunty Rosa already. And that lady resented it bitterly. Black Sheep rose to leave the room.

"Come and say good-night," said Aunty Rosa, offering a withered cheek.

"Huh!" said Black Sheep. "I never kiss you, and I'm not going to show off. Tell that woman what I've done, and see what she says."

Black Sheep climbed into bed feeling that he had lost Heaven after a glimpse through the gates. In half an hour "that woman" was bending over him. Black Sheep flung up his right arm. It wasn't fair to come and hit him in the dark. Even Aunty Rosa never tried that. But no blow followed.

"Are you showing off? I won't tell you anything more than Aunty Rosa has, and *she* doesn't know everything," said Black Sheep as clearly as he could for the arms round his neck.

"Oh, my son — my little, little son! It was my fault — *my* fault, darling —— and yet how could

we help it? Forgive me, Punch." The voice died out in a broken whisper, and two hot tears fell on Black Sheep's forehead.

"Has she been making you cry too!" he asked. "You should see Jane cry. But you're nice, and Jane is a Born Liar — Aunty Rosa says so."

"Hush, Punch, hush! My boy, don't talk like that. Try to love me a little bit — a little bit. You don't know how I want it. Punch-*baba*, come back to me! I am your Mother — your own Mother — and never mind the rest. I know — yes, I know, dear. It doesn't matter now. Punch, won't you care for me a little?"

It is astonishing how much petting a big boy of ten can endure when he is quite sure that there is no one to laugh at him. Black Sheep had never been made much of before, and here was this beautiful woman treating him — Black Sheep, the Child of the Devil and the inheritor of undying flame — as though he were a small God.

"I care for you a great deal, Mother dear," he whispered at last, "and I'm glad you've come back; but are you sure Aunty Rosa told you everything?"

"Everything. What *does* it matter? But" — the voice broke with a sob that was also laughter — "Punch, my poor, dear, half-blind darling, don't you think it was a little foolish of you?"

"*No.* It saved a lickin'."

Mamma shuddered and slipped away in the darkness to write a long letter to Papa. Here is an extract:—

. . . Judy is a dear, plump little prig who adores the woman, and wears with as much gravity as her religious opinions — only eight, Jack! — a venerable horse-hair atrocity which she calls her Bustle! I have just burnt it, and the child is asleep in my bed as I write. She will come to me at once. Punch I cannot quite understand. He is well nourished, but seems to have been worried into a system of small deceptions which the woman magnifies into deadly sins. Don't you recollect our own upbringing, dear, when the Fear of the Lord was so often the beginning of falsehood? I shall win Punch to me before long. I am taking the children away into the country to get them to know me, and, on the whole, I am content, or shall be when you come home, dear boy, and then, thank God, we shall be all under one roof again at last!

Three months later, Punch, no longer Black Sheep, has discovered that he is the veritable owner of a real, live, lovely Mamma, who is also a sister, comforter, and friend, and that he must protect her till the Father comes home. Deception does not suit the part of a protector, and, when one can do anything without question, where is the use of deception?

"Mother would be awfully cross if you walked through that ditch," says Judy, continuing a conversation.

"Mother's never angry," says Punch. "She'd

just say, 'You're a little *pagal*'; and that's not nice, but I'll show."

Punch walks through the ditch and mires himself to the knees. "Mother, dear," he shouts, "I'm just as dirty as I can pos-*sib*-ly be!"

"Then change your clothes as quickly as you pos-*sib*-ly can!" Mother's clear voice rings out from the house. "And don't be a little *pagal!*"

"There! 'Told you so," says Punch. "It's all different now, and we are just as much Mother's as if she had never gone."

Not altogether, O Punch, for when young lips have drunk deep of the bitter waters of Hate, Suspicion, and Despair, all the Love in the world will not wholly take away that knowledge; though it may turn darkened eyes for a while to the light, and teach Faith where no Faith was.

THE SHIP THAT FOUND HERSELF

THE SHIP THAT FOUND HERSELF

It was her first voyage, and though she was but a cargo-steamer of twenty-five hundred tons, she was the very best of her kind, the outcome of forty years of experiments and improvements in framework and machinery; and her designers and owner thought as much of her as though she had been the *Lucania*. Any one can make a floating hotel that will pay expenses, if he puts enough money into the saloon, and charges for private baths, suites of rooms, and such like; but in these days of competition and low freights every square inch of a cargo-boat must be built for cheapness, great hold-capacity, and a certain steady speed. This boat was, perhaps, two hundred and forty feet long and thirty-two feet wide, with arrangements that enabled her to carry cattle on her main and sheep on her upper deck if she wanted to; but her great glory was the amount of cargo that she could store away in her holds. Her owners — they were a very well known Scotch firm — came round with her from the north, where she had been launched and christened and fitted, to Liverpool,

where she was to take cargo for New York; and the owner's daughter, Miss Frazier, went to and fro on the clean decks, admiring the new paint and the brass work, and the patent winches, and particularly the strong, straight bow, over which she had cracked a bottle of champagne when she named the steamer the *Dimbula*. It was a beautiful September afternoon, and the boat in all her newness — she was painted lead-colour with a red funnel — looked very fine indeed. Her house-flag was flying, and her whistle from time to time acknowledged the salutes of friendly boats, who saw that she was new to the High and Narrow Seas and wished to make her welcome.

"And now," said Miss Frazier, delightedly, to the captain, "she's a real ship, isn't she? It seems only the other day father gave the order for her, and now — and now — isn't she a beauty!" The girl was proud of the firm, and talked as though she were the controlling partner.

"Oh, she's no so bad," the skipper replied cautiously. "But I'm sayin' that it takes more than christenin' to mak' a ship. In the nature o' things, Miss Frazier, if ye follow me, she's just irons and rivets and plates put into the form of a ship. She has to find herself yet."

"I thought father said she was exceptionally well found."

"So she is," said the skipper, with a laugh.

"But it's this way wi' ships, Miss Frazier. She's all here, but the parrts of her have not learned to work together yet. They've had no chance."

"The engines are working beautifully. I can hear them."

"Yes, indeed. But there's more than engines to a ship. Every inch of her, ye'll understand, has to be livened up and made to work wi' its neighbour — sweetenin' her, we call it, technically."

"And how will you do it?" the girl asked.

"We can no more than drive and steer her and so forth; but if we have rough weather this trip — it's likely — she'll learn the rest by heart! For a ship, ye'll obsairve, Miss Frazier, is in no sense a reegid body closed at both ends. She's a highly complex structure o' various an' conflictin' strains, wi' tissues that must give an' tak' accordin' to her personal modulus of elasteecity." Mr. Buchanan, the chief engineer, was coming towards them. "I'm sayin' to Miss Frazier, here, that our little *Dimbula* has to be sweetened yet, and nothin' but a gale will do it. How's all wi' your engines, Buck?"

"Well enough — true by plumb an' rule, o' course; but there's no spontaneeity yet." He turned to the girl. "Take my word, Miss Frazier, and maybe ye'll comprehend later; even after a pretty girl's christened a ship it does not follow

that there's such a thing as a ship under the men that work her."

"I was sayin' the very same, Mr. Buchanan," the skipper interrupted.

"That's more metaphysical than I can follow," said Miss Frazier, laughing.

"Why so? Ye're good Scotch, an'—I knew your mother's father, he was fra' Dumfries—ye've a vested right in metapheesics, Miss Frazier, just as ye have in the *Dimbula*," the engineer said.

"Eh, well, we must go down to the deep watters, an' earn Miss Frazier her deevidends. Will you not come to my cabin for tea?" said the skipper. "We'll be in dock the night, and when you're goin' back to Glasgie ye can think of us loadin' her down an' drivin' her forth—all for your sake."

In the next few days they stowed some four thousand tons dead-weight into the *Dimbula*, and took her out from Liverpool. As soon as she met the lift of the open water, she naturally began to talk. If you lay your ear to the side of the cabin, the next time you are in a steamer, you will hear hundreds of little voices in every direction, thrilling and buzzing, and whispering and popping, and gurgling and sobbing and squeaking exactly like a telephone in a thunder-storm. Wooden ships shriek and growl and grunt, but iron vessels throb and quiver through all their hundreds of

ribs and thousands of rivets. The *Dimbula* was very strongly built, and every piece of her had a letter or a number, or both, to describe it; and every piece had been hammered, or forged, or rolled, or punched by man, and had lived in the roar and rattle of the shipyard for months. Therefore, every piece had its own separate voice, in exact proportion to the amount of trouble spent upon it. Cast-iron, as a rule, says very little; but mild steel plates and wrought-iron, and ribs and beams that have been much bent and welded and riveted, talk continuously. Their conversation, of course, is not half as wise as our human talk, because they are all, though they do not know it, bound down one to the other in a black darkness, where they cannot tell what is happening near them, nor what will overtake them next.

As soon as she had cleared the Irish coast, a sullen, grey-headed old wave of the Atlantic climbed leisurely over her straight bows, and sat down on the steam-capstan used for hauling up the anchor. Now the capstan and the engine that drove it had been newly painted red and green; besides which, nobody likes being ducked.

"Don't you do that again," the capstan sputtered through the teeth of his cogs. "Hi! Where's the fellow gone?"

The wave had slouched overside with a plop and a chuckle; but "Plenty more where he came

from," said a brother-wave, and went through and over the capstan, who was bolted firmly to an iron plate on the iron deck-beams below.

"Can't you keep still up there?" said the deck-beams. "What's the matter with you? One minute you weigh twice as much as you ought to, and the next you don't!"

"It isn't my fault," said the capstan. "There's a green brute outside that comes and hits me on the head."

"Tell that to the shipwrights. You've been in position for months and you've never wriggled like this before. If you aren't careful you'll strain *us*."

"Talking of strain," said a low, rasping, unpleasant voice, "are any of you fellows — you deck-beams, we mean — aware that those exceedingly ugly knees of yours happen to be riveted into our structure — *ours?*"

"Who might you be?" the deck-beams inquired.

"Oh, nobody in particular," was the answer. "We're only the port and starboard upper-deck stringers; and if you persist in heaving and hiking like this, we shall be reluctantly compelled to take steps."

Now the stringers of the ship are long iron girders, so to speak, that run lengthways from stern to bow. They keep the iron frames (what

are called ribs in a wooden ship) in place, and also help to hold the ends of the deck-beams, which go from side to side of the ship. Stringers always consider themselves most important, because they are so long.

"You will take steps — will you?" This was a long echoing rumble. It came from the frames — scores and scores of them, each one about eighteen inches distant from the next, and each riveted to the stringers in four places. "We think you will have a certain amount of trouble in *that*"; and thousands and thousands of the little rivets that held everything together whispered: "You will! You will! Stop quivering and be quiet. Hold on, brethren! Hold on! Hot Punches! What's that?"

Rivets have no teeth, so they cannot chatter with fright; but they did their best as a fluttering jar swept along the ship from stern to bow, and she shook like a rat in a terrier's mouth.

An unusually severe pitch, for the sea was rising, had lifted the big throbbing screw nearly to the surface, and it was spinning round in a kind of soda-water — half sea and half air — going much faster than was proper, because there was no deep water for it to work in. As it sank again, the engines — and they were triple expansion, three cylinders in a row — snorted through all their three pistons. "Was that a joke, you

fellow outside? It's an uncommonly poor one. How are we to do our work if you fly off the handle that way?"

"I didn't fly off the handle," said the screw, twirling huskily at the end of the screw-shaft. "If I had, you'd have been scrap-iron by this time. The sea dropped away from under me, and I had nothing to catch on to. That's all."

"That's all, d'you call it?" said the thrust-block, whose business it is to take the push of the screw; for if a screw had nothing to hold it back it would crawl right into the engine-room. (It is the holding back of the screwing action that gives the drive to a ship.) "I know I do my work deep down and out of sight, but I warn you I expect justice. All I ask for is bare justice. Why can't you push steadily and evenly, instead of whizzing like a whirligig, and making me hot under all my collars?" The thrust-block had six collars, each faced with brass, and he did not wish to get them heated.

All the bearings that supported the fifty feet of screw-shaft as it ran to the stern whispered: "Justice — give us justice."

"I can only give you what I can get," the screw answered. "Look out! It's coming again!"

He rose with a roar as the *Dimbula* plunged, and "whack — flack — whack — whack" went

the engines, furiously, for they had little to check them.

"I'm the noblest outcome of human ingenuity — Mr. Buchanan says so," squealed the high-pressure cylinder. "This is simply ridiculous!" The piston went up savagely, and choked, for half the steam behind it was mixed with dirty water. "Help! Oiler! Fitter! Stoker! Help! I'm choking," it gasped. "Never in the history of maritime invention has such a calamity overtaken one so young and strong. And if I go, who's to drive the ship?"

"Hush! oh, hush!" whispered the Steam, who, of course, had been to sea many times before. He used to spend his leisure ashore in a cloud, or a gutter, or a flower-pot, or a thunder-storm, or anywhere else where water was needed. "That's only a little priming, a little carrying-over, as they call it. It'll happen all night, on and off. I don't say it's nice, but it's the best we can do under the circumstances."

"What difference can circumstances make? I'm here to do my work — on clean, dry steam. Blow circumstances!" the cylinder roared.

"The circumstances will attend to the blowing. I've worked on the North Atlantic run a good many times — it's going to be rough before morning."

"It isn't distressingly calm now," said the extra-

strong frames — they were called web-frames — in the engine-room. "There's an upward thrust that we don't understand, and there's a twist that is very bad for our brackets and diamond-plates, and there's a sort of west-northwesterly pull, that follows the twist, which seriously annoys us. We mention this because we happened to cost a good deal of money, and we feel sure that the owner would not approve of our being treated in this frivolous way."

"I'm afraid the matter is out of owner's hands for the present," said the Steam, slipping into the condenser. "You're left to your own devices till the weather betters."

"I wouldn't mind the weather," said a flat bass voice below; "it's this confounded cargo that's breaking my heart. I'm the garboard-strake, and I'm twice as thick as most of the others, and I ought to know something."

The garboard-strake is the lowest plate in the bottom of a ship, and the *Dimbula's* garboard-strake was nearly three-quarters of an inch mild steel.

"The sea pushes me up in a way I should never have expected," the strake grunted, "and the cargo pushes me down, and, between the two, I don't know what I'm supposed to do."

"When in doubt, hold on," rumbled the Steam, making head in the boilers.

"Yes; but there's only dark, and cold, and hurry, down here; and how do I know whether the other plates are doing their duty? Those bulwark-plates up above, I've heard, ain't more than five-sixteenths of an inch thick — scandalous, I call it."

"I agree with you," said a huge web-frame, by the main cargo-hatch. He was deeper and thicker than all the others, and curved half-way across the ship in the shape of half an arch, to support the deck where deck-beams would have been in the way of cargo coming up and down. "I work entirely unsupported, and I observe that I am the sole strength of this vessel, so far as my vision extends. The responsibility, I assure you, is enormous. I believe the money-value of the cargo is over one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Think of that!"

"And every pound of it is dependent on my personal exertions." Here spoke a sea-valve that communicated directly with the water outside, and was seated not very far from the garboard-strake. "I rejoice to think that I am a Prince-Hyde Valve, with best Pará rubber facings. Five patents cover me — I mention this without pride — five separate and several patents, each one finer than the other. At present I am screwed fast. Should I open, you would immediately be swamped. This is incontrovertible!"

Patent things always use the longest words they can. It is a trick that they pick up from their inventors.

"That's news," said a big centrifugal bilge-pump. "I had an idea that you were employed to clean decks and things with. At least, I've used you for that more than once. I forget the precise number, in thousands, of gallons which I am guaranteed to throw per hour; but I assure you, my complaining friends, that there is not the least danger. I alone am capable of clearing any water that may find its way here. By my Biggest Deliveries, we pitched then!"

The sea was getting up in workmanlike style. It was a dead westerly gale, blown from under a ragged opening of green sky, narrowed on all sides by fat, grey clouds; and the wind bit like pincers as it fretted the spray into lacework on the flanks of the waves.

"I tell you what it is," the foremast telephoned down its wire-stays. "I'm up here, and I can take a dispassionate view of things. There's an organised conspiracy against us. I'm sure of it, because every single one of these waves is heading directly for our bows. The whole sea is concerned in it — and so's the wind. It's awful!"

"What's awful?" said a wave, drowning the capstan for the hundredth time.

"This organised conspiracy on your part," the capstan gurgled, taking his cue from the mast.

"Organised bubbles and spindrift! There has been a depression in the Gulf of Mexico. Excuse me!" He leaped overside; but his friends took up the tale one after another.

"Which has advanced—" That wave hove green water over the funnel.

"As far as Cape Hatteras—" He drenched the bridge.

"And is now going out to sea—to sea—to sea!" The third went out in three surges, making a clean sweep of a boat, which turned bottom up and sank in the darkening troughs alongside, while the broken falls whipped the davits.

"That's all there is to it," seethed the white water roaring through the scuppers. "There's no animus in our proceedings. We're only meteorological corollaries."

"Is it going to get any worse?" said the bow-anchor chained down to the deck, where he could only breathe once in five minutes.

"'Not knowing, can't say. Wind may blow a bit by midnight. Thanks awfully. Good-bye."

The wave that spoke so politely had travelled some distance aft, and found itself all mixed up on the deck amidships, which was a well-deck sunk between high bulwarks. One of the bulwark-plates, which was hung on hinges to open outward,

had swung out, and passed the bulk of the water back to the sea again with a clean smack.

"Evidently that's what I'm made for," said the plate, closing again with a sputter of pride. "Oh, no, you don't, my friend!"

The top of a wave was trying to get in from the outside, but as the plate did not open in that direction, the defeated water spurted back.

"Not bad for five-sixteenths of an inch," said the bulwark-plate. "My work, I see, is laid down for the night"; and it began opening and shutting, as it was designed to do, with the motion of the ship.

"We are not what you might call idle," groaned all the frames together, as the *Dimbula* climbed a big wave, lay on her side at the top, and shot into the next hollow, twisting in the descent. A huge swell pushed up exactly under her middle, and her bow and stern hung free with nothing to support them. Then one joking wave caught her up at the bow, and another at the stern, while the rest of the water slunk away from under her just to see how she would like it; so she was held up at her two ends only, and the weight of the cargo and the machinery fell on the groaning iron keels and bilge-stringers.

"Ease off! Ease off, there!" roared the garboard-strake. "I want one-eighth of an inch fair play. D' you hear me, you rivets!"

"Ease off! Ease off!" cried the bilge-stringers. "Don't hold us so tight to the frames!"

"Ease off!" grunted the deck-beams, as the *Dimbula* rolled fearfully. "You've cramped our knees into the stringers, and we can't move. Ease off, you flat-headed little nuisances."

Then two converging seas hit the bows, one on each side, and fell away in torrents of streaming thunder.

"Ease off!" shouted the forward collision-bulkhead. "I want to crumple up, but I'm stiffened in every direction. Ease off, you dirty little forge-filings. Let me breathe!"

All the hundreds of plates that are riveted to the frames, and make the outside skin of every steamer, echoed the call, for each plate wanted to shift and creep a little, and each plate, according to its position, complained against the rivets.

"We can't help it! *We* can't help it!" they murmured in reply. "We're put here to hold you, and we're going to do it; you never pull us twice in the same direction. If you'd say what you were going to do next, we'd try to meet your views."

"As far as I could feel," said the upper-deck planking, and that was four inches thick, "every single iron near me was pushing or pulling in opposite directions. Now, what's the sense of that? My friends, let us all pull together."

"Pull any way you please," roared the funnel, "so long as you don't try your experiments on *me*. I need fourteen wire-ropes, all pulling in different directions, to hold me steady. Isn't that so?"

"We believe you, my boy!" whistled the funnel-stays through their clinched teeth, as they twanged in the wind from the top of the funnel to the deck.

"Nonsense! We must all pull together," the decks repeated. "Pull lengthways."

"Very good," said the stringers; "then stop pushing sideways when you get wet. Be content to run gracefully fore and aft, and curve in at the ends as we do."

"No — no curves at the end. A very slight workmanlike curve from side to side, with a good grip at each knee, and little pieces welded on," said the deck-beams.

"Fiddle!" cried the iron pillars of the deep, dark hold. "Who ever heard of curves? Stand up straight; be a perfectly round column, and carry tons of good solid weight — like that! There!" A big sea smashed on the deck above, and the pillars stiffened themselves to the load.

"Straight up and down is not bad," said the frames, who ran that way in the sides of the ship, "but you must also expand yourselves sideways. Expansion is the law of life, children. Open out! open out!"

"Come back!" said the deck-beams, savagely, as the upward heave of the sea made the frames try to open. "Come back to your bearings, you slack-jawed irons!"

"Rigidity! Rigidity! Rigidity!" thumped the engines. "Absolute, unvarying rigidity — rigidity!"

"You see!" whined the rivets, in chorus. "No two of you will ever pull alike, and — and you blame it all on us. We only know how to go through a plate and bite down on both sides so that it can't, and mustn't, and sha'n't move."

"I've got one fraction of an inch play, at any rate," said the garboard-strake, triumphantly. So he had, and all the bottom of the ship felt the easier for it.

"Then we're no good," sobbed the bottom rivets. "We were ordered — we were ordered — never to give; and we've given, and the sea will come in, and we'll all go to the bottom together! First we're blamed for everything unpleasant, and now we haven't the consolation of having done our work."

"Don't say I told you," whispered the Steam, consolingly; "but, between you and me and the last cloud I came from, it was bound to happen sooner or later. You *had* to give a fraction, and you've given without knowing it. Now, hold on, as before."

"What's the use?" a few hundred rivets chattered. "We've given — we've given; and the sooner we confess that we can't keep the ship together, and go off our little heads, the easier it will be. No rivet forged can stand this strain."

"No one rivet was ever meant to. Share it among you," the Steam answered.

"The others can have my share. I'm going to pull out," said a rivet in one of the forward plates.

"If you go, others will follow," hissed the Steam. "There's nothing so contagious in a boat as rivets going. Why, I knew a little chap like you — he was an eighth of an inch fatter, though — on a steamer — to be sure, she was only twelve hundred tons, now I come to think of it — in exactly the same place as you are. He pulled out in a bit of a bobble of a sea, not half as bad as this, and he started all his friends on the same butt-strap, and the plates opened like a furnace door, and I had to climb into the nearest fog-bank, while the boat went down."

"Now that's peculiarly disgraceful," said the rivet. "Fatter than me, was he, and in a steamer not half our tonnage? Reedy little peg! I blush for the family, sir." He settled himself more firmly than ever in his place, and the Steam chuckled.

"You see," he went on, quite gravely, "a rivet,

and especially a rivet in your position, is really the one indispensable part of the ship."

The Steam did not say that he had whispered the very same thing to every single piece of iron aboard. There is no sense in telling too much.

And all that while the little *Dimbula* pitched and chopped, and swung and slewed, and lay down as though she were going to die, and got up as though she had been stung, and threw her nose round and round in circles half a dozen times as she dipped, for the gale was at its worst. It was inky black, in spite of the tearing white froth on the waves, and, to top everything, the rain began to fall in sheets, so that you could not see your hand before your face. This did not make much difference to the ironwork below, but it troubled the foremast a good deal.

"Now it's all finished," he said dismally. "The conspiracy is too strong for us. There is nothing left but to —"

"*Hurraar! Brrrraaah! Brrrrrp!*" roared the Steam through the fog-horn, till the decks quivered. "Don't be frightened, below. It's only me, just throwing out a few words, in case any one happens to be rolling round to-night."

"You don't mean to say there's any one except *us* on the sea in such weather?" said the funnel, in a husky snuffle.

"Scores of 'em," said the Steam, clearing its

throat. "*Rrrrrraaa! Brraaaaa! Prrrrp!* It's a trifle windy up here; and, Great Boilers! how it rains!"

"We're drowning," said the scuppers. They had been doing nothing else all night, but this steady thrash of rain above them seemed to be the end of the world.

"That's all right. We'll be easier in an hour or two. First the wind and then the rain: Soon you may make sail again! *Grrraaaaaah! Drrrraaaa! Drrrp!* I have a notion that the sea is going down already. If it does you'll learn something about rolling. We've only pitched till now. By the way, aren't you chaps in the hold a little easier than you were?"

There was just as much groaning and straining as ever, but it was not so loud or squeaky in tone; and when the ship quivered she did not jar stiffly, like a poker hit on the floor, but gave with a supple little waggle, like a perfectly balanced golf-club.

"We have made a most amazing discovery," said the stringers, one after another. "A discovery that entirely changes the situation. We have found, for the first time in the history of shipbuilding, that the inward pull of the deck-beams and the outward thrust of the frames locks us, as it were, more closely in our places, and enables us to endure a strain which is entirely without parallel in the records of marine architecture."

The Steam turned a laugh quickly into a roar up the fog-horn. "What massive intellects you great stringers have," he said softly, when he had finished.

"We also," began the deck-beams, "are discoverers and geniuses. We are of opinion that the support of the hold-pillars materially helps us. We find that we lock up on them when we are subjected to a heavy and singular weight of sea above."

Here the *Dimbula* shot down a hollow, lying almost on her side; righting at the bottom with a wrench and a spasm.

"In these cases — are you aware of this, Steam? — the plating at the bows, and particularly at the stern — we would also mention the floors beneath us — help *us* to resist any tendency to spring." The frames spoke, in the solemn awed voice which people use when they have just come across something entirely new for the very first time.

"I'm only a poor puffy little flutterer," said the Steam, "but I have to stand a good deal of pressure in my business. It's all tremendously interesting. Tell us some more. You fellows are so strong."

"Watch us and you'll see," said the bow-plates, proudly. "Ready, behind there! Here's the father and mother of waves coming! Sit tight, rivets all!" A great sluicing comber thundered

by, but through the scuffle and confusion the Steam could hear the low, quick cries of the iron-work as the various strains took them — cries like these: "Easy, now — easy! *Now* push for all your strength! Hold out! Give a fraction! Hold up! Pull in! Shove crossways! Mind the strain at the ends! Grip, now! Bite tight! Let the water get away from under — and there she goes!"

The wave raced off into the darkness, shouting, "Not bad, that, if it's your first run!" and the drenched and ducked ship throbbed to the beat of the engines inside her. All three cylinders were white with the salt spray that had come down through the engine-room hatch; there was white fur on the canvas-bound steam-pipes, and even the bright-work deep below was speckled and soiled; but the cylinders had learned to make the most of steam that was half water, and were pounding along cheerfully.

"How's the noblest outcome of human ingenuity hitting it?" said the Steam, as he whirled through the engine-room.

"Nothing for nothing in this world of woe," the cylinders answered, as though they had been working for centuries, "and precious little for seventy-five pounds head. We've made two knots this last hour and a quarter! Rather humiliating for eight hundred horse-power, isn't it?"

"Well, it's better than drifting astern, at any rate. You seem rather less — how shall I put it? — stiff in the back than you were."

"If you'd been hammered as we've been this night, you wouldn't be stiff — iff — iff, either. Theoreti — retti — retti — cally, of course, rigidity is the thing. Purrr — purr — practically, there has to be a little give and take. *We* found that out by working on our sides for five minutes at a stretch — chch — chh. How's the weather?"

"'Sea's going down fast," said the Steam.

"Good business," said the high-pressure cylinder. "Whack her up, boys. They've given us five pounds more steam"; and he began humming the first bars of "Said the young Obadiah to the old Obadiah," which, as you may have noticed, is a pet tune among engines not built for high speed. Racing-liners with twin-screws sing "The Turkish Patrol" and the overture to the "Bronze Horse," and "Madame Angot," till something goes wrong, and then they render Gounod's "Funeral March of a Marionette," with variations.

"You'll learn a song of your own some fine day," said the Steam, as he flew up the fog-horn for one last bellow.

Next day the sky cleared and the sea dropped a little, and the *Dimbula* began to roll from side to side till every inch of iron in her was sick and

giddy. But luckily they did not all feel ill at the same time: otherwise she would have opened out like a wet paper box.

The Steam whistled warnings as he went about his business: it is in this short, quick roll and tumble that follows a heavy sea that most of the accidents happen, for then everything thinks that the worst is over and goes off guard. So he orated and chattered till the beams and frames and floors and stringers and things had learned how to lock down and lock up on one another, and endure this new kind of strain.

They found ample time to practise, for they were sixteen days at sea, and it was foul weather till within a hundred miles of New York. The *Dimbula* picked up her pilot, and came in covered with salt and red rust. Her funnel was dirty-grey from top to bottom; two boats had been carried away; three copper ventilators looked like hats after a fight with the police; the bridge had a dimple in the middle of it; the house that covered the steam steering-gear was split as with hatchets; there was a bill for small repairs in the engine-room almost as long as the screw-shaft; the forward cargo-hatch fell into bucket-staves when they raised the iron cross-bars; and the steam-capstan had been badly wrenched on its bed. Altogether, as the skipper said, it was "a pretty general average."

"But she's soupled," he said to Mr. Buchanan. "For all her dead-weight she rode like a yacht. Ye mind that last blow off the Banks? I am proud of her, Buck."

"It's vera good," said the chief engineer, looking along the dishevelled decks. "Now, a man judgin' superfeecially would say we were a wreck, but we know otherwise — by experience."

Naturally everything in the *Dimbula* fairly stiffened with pride, and the foremast and the forward collision-bulkhead, who are pushing creatures, begged the Steam to warn the Port of New York of their arrival. "Tell those big boats all about us," they said. "They seem to take us quite as a matter of course."

It was a glorious, clear, dead calm morning, and in single file, with less than half a mile between each, their bands playing and their tugboats shouting and waving handkerchiefs, were the *Majestic*, the *Paris*, the *Touraine*, the *Servia*, the *Kaiser Wilhelm II.*, and the *Werkendam*, all statelily going out to sea. As the *Dimbula* shifted her helm to give the great boats clear way, the Steam (who knows far too much to mind making an exhibition of himself now and then) shouted:

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Princes, Dukes, and Barons of the High Seas! Know ye by these presents, we are the *Dimbula*, fifteen days nine hours from Liverpool, having crossed the Atlantic

with four thousand ton of cargo for the first time in our career! We have not foundered. We are here. *'Eer! 'Eer!* We are not disabled. But we have had a time wholly unparalleled in the annals of ship-building! Our decks were swept! We pitched; we rolled! We thought we were going to die! *Hi! Hi!* But we didn't. We wish to give notice that we have come to New York all the way across the Atlantic, through the worst weather in the world; and we are the *Dimbula!* We are — arr — ha — ha — ha-r-r-r!"

The beautiful line of boats swept by as steadily as the procession of the Seasons. The *Dimbula* heard the *Majestic* say, "Hmph!" and the *Paris* grunted, "How!" and the *Touraine* said, "Oui!" with a little coquettish flicker of steam; and the *Servia* said, "Haw!" and the *Kaiser* and the *Werkendam* said, "Hoch!" Dutch fashion — and that was absolutely all.

"I did my best," said the Steam, gravely, "but I don't think they were much impressed with us, somehow. Do you?"

"It's simply disgusting," said the bow-plates. "They might have seen what we've been through. There isn't a ship on the sea that has suffered as we have — is there, now?"

"Well, I wouldn't go so far as that," said the Steam, "because I've worked on some of those boats, and sent them through weather quite as

bad as the fortnight that we've had, in six days; and some of them are a little over ten thousand tons, I believe. Now I've seen the *Majestic*, for instance, ducked from her bows to her funnel; and I've helped the *Arizona*, I think she was, to back off an iceberg she met with one dark night; and I had to run out of the *Paris's* engine-room, one day, because there was thirty foot of water in it. Of course, I don't deny —" The Steam shut off suddenly, as a tugboat, loaded with a political club and a brass band, that had been to see a New York Senator off to Europe, crossed their bows, going to Hoboken. There was a long silence that reached, without a break, from the cut-water to the propeller-blades of the *Dimbula*.

Then a new, big voice said slowly and thickly, as though the owner had just waked up: "It's my conviction that I have made a fool of myself."

The Steam knew what had happened at once; for when a ship finds herself all the talking of the separate pieces ceases and melts into one voice, which is the soul of the ship.

"Who are you?" he said, with a laugh.

"I am the *Dimbula*, of course. I've never been anything else except that — and a fool!"

The tugboat, which was doing its very best to be run down, got away just in time; its band playing clashily and brassily a popular but impolite air:

In the days of old Rameses — are you on?
In the days of old Rameses — are you on?
In the days of old Rameses,
That story had paresis,
Are you on — are you on — are you on?

'Well, I'm glad you've found yourself," said the Steam. "To tell the truth, I was a little tired of talking to all those ribs and stringers. Here's Quarantine. After that we'll go to our wharf and clean up a little, and — next month we'll do it all over again."

THE TOMB OF HIS ANCESTORS

THE TOMB OF HIS ANCESTORS

Some people will tell you that if there were but a single loaf of bread in all India it would be divided equally between the Plowdens, the Trevors, the Beadons, and the Rivett-Carnacs. That is only one way of saying that certain families serve India generation after generation, as dolphins follow in line across the open sea.

Let us take a small and obscure case. There has been at least one representative of the Devonshire Chinns in or near Central India since the days of Lieutenant-Fireworker Humphrey Chinn, of the Bombay European Regiment, who assisted at the capture of Seringapatam in 1799. Alfred Ellis Chinn, Humphrey's younger brother, commanded a regiment of Bombay grenadiers from 1804 to 1813, when he saw some mixed fighting; and in 1834 John Chinn of the same family — we will call him John Chinn the First — came to light as a level-headed administrator in time of trouble at a place called Mundesur. He died young, but left his mark on the new country, and the Honourable the Board of Directors of the Honourable

the East India Company embodied his virtues in a stately resolution, and paid for the expenses of his tomb among the Satpura hills.

He was succeeded by his son, Lionel Chinn, who left the little old Devonshire home just in time to be severely wounded in the Mutiny. He spent his working life within a hundred and fifty miles of John Chinn's grave, and rose to the command of a regiment of small, wild hill-men, most of whom had known his father. His son John was born in the small thatched-roofed, mud-walled cantonment, which is even to-day eighty miles from the nearest railway, in the heart of a scrubby, tigerish country. Colonel Lionel Chinn served thirty years and retired. In the Canal his steamer passed the outward-bound troop-ship, carrying his son eastward to the family duty.

The Chinns are luckier than most folk, because they know exactly what they must do. A clever Chinn passes for the Bombay Civil Service, and gets away to Central India, where everybody is glad to see him. A dull Chinn enters the Police Department or the Woods and Forest, and sooner or later he, too, appears in Central India, and that is what gave rise to the saying, "Central India is inhabited by Bhils, Mairs, and Chinns, all very much alike." The breed is small-boned, dark, and silent, and the stupidest of them are good shots. John Chinn the Second was rather clever,

but as the eldest son he entered the army, according to Chinn tradition. His duty was to abide in his father's regiment for the term of his natural life, though the corps was one which most men would have paid heavily to avoid. They were irregulars, small, dark, and blackish, clothed in rifle-green with black-leather trimmings; and friends called them the "Wuddars," which means a race of low-caste people who dig up rats to eat. But the Wuddars did not resent it. They were the only Wuddars, and their points of pride were these:

Firstly, they had fewer English officers than any native regiment. Secondly, their subalterns were not mounted on parade, as is the general rule, but walked at the head of their men. A man who can hold his own with the Wuddars at their quickstep must be sound in wind and limb. Thirdly, they were the most *pukka shikarries* (out-and-out hunters) in all India. Fourthly—up to one-hundredthly—they were the Wuddars—Chinn's Irregular Bhil Levies of the old days, but now, henceforward and for ever, the Wuddars.

No Englishman entered their mess except for love or through family usage. The officers talked to their soldiers in a tongue not two hundred white folk in India understood; and the men were their children, all drawn from the Bhils, who are, perhaps, the strangest of the many strange

races in India. They were, and at heart are, wild men, furtive, shy, full of untold superstitions. The races whom we call natives of the country found the Bhil in possession of the land when they first broke into that part of the world thousands of years ago. The books call them Pre-Aryan, Aboriginal, Dravidian, and so forth; and, in other words, that is what the Bhils call themselves. When a Rajput chief whose bards can sing his pedigree backwards for twelve hundred years is set on the throne, his investiture is not complete till he has been marked on the forehead with blood from the veins of a Bhil. The Rajputs say the ceremony has no meaning, but the Bhil knows that it is the last, last shadow of his old rights as the long-ago owner of the soil.

Centuries of oppression and massacre made the Bhil a cruel and half-crazy thief and cattle-stealer, and when the English came he seemed to be almost as open to civilisation as the tigers of his own jungles. But John Chinn the First, father of Lionel, grandfather of our John, went into his country, lived with him, learned his language, shot the deer that stole his poor crops, and won his confidence, so that some Bhils learned to plough and sow, while others were coaxed into the Company's service to police their friends.

When they understood that standing in line did not mean instant execution, they accepted

soldiering as a cumbrous but amusing kind of sport, and were zealous to keep the wild Bhils under control. That was the thin edge of the wedge. John Chinn the First gave them written promises that, if they were good from a certain date, the Government would overlook previous offences; and since John Chinn was never known to break his word — he promised once to hang a Bhil locally esteemed invulnerable, and hanged him in front of his tribe for seven proved murders — the Bhils settled down as steadily as they knew how. It was slow, unseen work, of the sort that is being done all over India to-day; and though John Chinn's only reward came, as I have said, in the shape of a grave at Government expense, the little people of the hills never forgot him.

Colonel Lionel Chinn knew and loved them, too, and they were very fairly civilised, for Bhils, before his service ended. Many of them could hardly be distinguished from low-caste Hindoo farmers; but in the south, where John Chinn the First was buried, the wildest still clung to the Satpura ranges, cherishing a legend that some day Jan Chinn, as they called him, would return to his own. In the mean time they mistrusted the white man and his ways. The least excitement would stampede them, plundering, at random, and now and then killing; but if they were

handled discreetly they grieved like children, and promised never to do it again.

The Bhils of the regiment — the uniformed men — were virtuous in many ways, but they needed humouring. They felt bored and home-sick unless taken after tiger as beaters; and their cold-blooded daring — all Wuddars shoot tigers on foot: it is their caste-mark — made even the officers wonder. They would follow up a wounded tiger as unconcernedly as though it were a sparrow with a broken wing; and this through a country full of caves and rifts and pits, where a wild beast could hold a dozen men at his mercy. Now and then some little man was brought to barracks with his head smashed in or his ribs torn away; but his companions never learned caution; they contented themselves with settling the tiger.

Young John Chinn was decanted at the verandah of the Wuddars' lonely mess-house from the back seat of a two-wheeled cart, his gun-cases cascading all round him. The slender little, hookey-nosed boy looked forlorn as a strayed goat when he slapped the white dust off his knees, and the cart jolted down the glaring road. But in his heart he was contented. After all, this was the place where he had been born, and things were not much changed since he had been sent to England, a child, fifteen years ago.

There were a few new buildings, but the air

and the smell and the sunshine were the same; and the little green men who crossed the parade-ground looked very familiar. Three weeks ago John Chinn would have said he did not remember a word of the Bhil tongue, but at the mess door he found his lips moving in sentences that he did not understand — bits of old nursery rhymes, and tail-ends of such orders as his father used to give the men.

The Colonel watched him come up the steps, and laughed.

"Look!" he said to the Major. "No need to ask the young un's breed. He's a *pukka* Chinn. 'Might be his father in the Fifties over again."

"'Hope he'll shoot as straight," said the Major. "He's brought enough ironmongery with him."

"'Wouldn't be a Chinn if he didn't. Watch him blowin' his nose. 'Regular Chinn beak. 'Flourishes his handkerchief like his father. It's the second edition — line for line."

"'Fairy tale, by Jove!" said the Major, peering through the slats of the jalousies. "If he's the lawful heir, he'll . . . Now old Chinn could no more pass that chick without fiddling with it than . . ."

"His son!" said the Colonel, jumping up.

"Well, I be blowed!" said the Major. The boy's eye had been caught by a split-reed screen that hung on a slew between the verandah pillars,

and, mechanically, he had tweaked the edge to set it level. Old Chinn had sworn three times a day at that screen for many years; he could never get it to his satisfaction. His son entered the anteroom in the middle of a fivefold silence. They made him welcome for his father's sake and, as they took stock of him, for his own. He was ridiculously like the portrait of the Colonel on the wall, and when he had washed a little of the dust from his throat he went to his quarters with the old man's short, noiseless jungle-step.

"So much for heredity," said the Major. "That comes of four generations among the Bhils."

"And the men know it," said a Wing officer. "They've been waiting for this youth with their tongues hanging out. I am persuaded that, unless he absolutely beats 'em over the head, they'll lie down by companies and worship him."

"Nothin' like havin' a father before you," said the Major. "I'm a parvenu with my chaps. I've only been twenty years in the regiment, and my revered parent he was a simple squire. There's no getting at the bottom of a Bhil's mind. Now, *why* is the superior bearer that young Chinn brought with him fleeing across country with his bundle?" He stepped into the verandah, and shouted after the man — a typical new-joined subaltern's servant who speaks English and cheats in proportion.

"What is it?" he called.

"Plenty bad man here. I going, sar," was the reply. "'Have taken Sahib's keys, and say will shoot."

"Doocid lucid — doocid convincin'. How those up-country thieves can leg it! He has been badly frightened by some one." The Major strolled to his quarters to dress for mess.

Young Chinn, walking like a man in a dream, had fetched a compass round the entire cantonment before going to his own tiny cottage. The captain's quarters, in which he had been born, delayed him for a little; then he looked at the well on the parade-ground, where he had sat of evenings with his nurse, and at the ten-by-fourteen church, where the officers went to service if a chaplain of any official creed happened to come along. It seemed very small as compared with the gigantic buildings he used to stare up at, but it was the same place.

From time to time he passed a knot of silent soldiers, who saluted. They might have been the very men who had carried him on their backs when he was in his first knickerbockers. A faint light burned in his room, and, as he entered, hands clasped his feet, and a voice murmured from the floor.

"Who is it?" said young Chinn, not knowing he spoke in the Bhil tongue.

"I bore you in my arms, Sahib, when I was a strong man and you were a small one — crying, crying, crying! I am your servant, as I was your father's before you. We are all your servants."

Young Chinn could not trust himself to reply, and the voice went on:

"I have taken your keys from that fat foreigner, and sent him away; and the studs are in the shirt for mess. Who should know, if I do not know? And so the baby has become a man, and forgets his nurse; but my nephew shall make a good servant, or I will beat him twice a day."

Then there rose up, with a rattle, as straight as a Bhil arrow, a little white-haired wizened ape of a man, with medals and orders on his tunic, stammering, saluting, and trembling. Behind him a young and wiry Bhil, in uniform, was taking the trees out of Chinn's mess-boots.

Chinn's eyes were full of tears. The old man held out his keys.

"Foreigners are bad people. He will never come back again. We are all servants of your father's son. Has the Sahib forgotten who took him to see the trapped tiger in the village across the river, when his mother was so frightened and he was so brave?"

The scene came back to Chinn in great magic-lantern flashes. "Bukta!" he cried; and all in a

breath: "You promised nothing should hurt me. *Is* it Bukta?"

The man was at his feet a second time. "He has not forgotten. He remembers his own people as his father remembered. Now can I die. But first I will live and show the Sahib how to kill tigers. That *that* yonder is my nephew. If he is not a good servant, beat him and send him to me, and I will surely kill him, for now the Sahib is with his own people. Ai, Jan *baba* — Jan *baba!* My Jan *baba!* I will stay here and see that this does his work well. Take off his boots, fool. Sit down upon the bed, Sahib, and let me look. It *is* Jan *baba*."

He pushed forward the hilt of his sword as a sign of service, which is an honour paid only to viceroys, governors, generals, or to little children whom one loves dearly. Chinn touched the hilt mechanically with three fingers, muttering he knew not what. It happened to be the old answer of his childhood, when Bukta in jest called him the little General Sahib.

The Major's quarters were opposite Chinn's, and when he heard his servant gasp with surprise he looked across the room. Then the Major sat on the bed and whistled; for the spectacle of the senior native commissioned officer of the regiment, an "unmixed" Bhil, a Companion of the Order of British India, with thirty-five years' spotless ser-

vice in the army, and a rank among his own people superior to that of many Bengal princelings, valeting the last-joined subaltern, was a little too much for his nerves.

The throaty bugles blew the Mess-call that has a long legend behind it. First a few piercing notes like the shrieks of beaters in a far-away cover, and next, large, full, and smooth, the refrain of the wild song: "And oh, and oh, the green pulse of Mundore — Mundore!"

"All little children were in bed when the Sahib heard that call last," said Bukta, passing Chinn a clean handkerchief. The call brought back memories of his cot under the mosquito-netting, his mother's kiss, and the sound of footsteps growing fainter as he dropped asleep among his men. So he hooked the dark collar of his new mess-jacket, and went to dinner like a prince who has newly inherited his father's crown.

Old Bukta swaggered forth curling his whiskers. He knew his own value, and no money and no rank within the gift of the Government would have induced him to put studs in young officers' shirts, or to hand them clean ties. Yet, when he took off his uniform that night, and squatted among his fellows for a quiet smoke, he told them what he had done, and they said that he was entirely right. Thereat Bukta propounded a theory which to a white mind would have seemed raving

insanity; but the whispering, level-headed little men of war considered it from every point of view, and thought that there might be a great deal in it.

At mess under the oil-lamps the talk turned as usual to the unfailing subject of *shikar* — big game-shooting of every kind and under all sorts of conditions. Young Chinn opened his eyes when he understood that each one of his companions had shot several tigers in the Wuddar style — on foot, that is — making no more of the business than if the brute had been a dog.

"In nine cases out of ten," said the Major, "a tiger is almost as dangerous as a porcupine. But the tenth time you come home feet first."

That set all talking, and long before midnight Chinn's brain was in a whirl with stories of tigers — man-eaters and cattle-killers each pursuing his own business as methodically as clerks in an office; new tigers that had lately come into such-and-such a district; and old, friendly beasts of great cunning, known by nicknames in the mess — such as "Puggy," who was lazy, with huge paws, and "Mrs. Malaprop," who turned up when you never expected her, and made female noises. Then they spoke of Bhil superstitions, a wide and picturesque field, till young Chinn hinted that they must be pulling his leg.

"'Deed, we aren't," said a man on his left. "We know all about you. You're a Chinn and

all that, and you've a sort of vested right here; but if you don't believe what *we're* telling you, what will you do when old Bukta begins his stories? He knows about ghost-tigers, and tigers that go to a hell of their own; and tigers that walk on their hind feet; and your grandpapa's riding-tiger, as well. 'Odd he hasn't spoken of that yet."

"You know you've an ancestor buried down Satpura way, don't you?" said the Major, as Chinn smiled irresolutely.

"Of course I do," said Chinn, who had the chronicle of the Book of Chinn by heart. It lies in a worn old ledger on the Chinese lacquer table behind the piano in the Devonshire home, and the children are allowed to look at it on Sundays.

"Well, I wasn't sure. Your revered ancestor, my boy, according to the Bhils, has a tiger of his own — a saddle-tiger that he rides round the country whenever he feels inclined. *I* don't call it decent in an ex-Collector's ghost; but that is what the Southern Bhils believe. Even our men, who might be called moderately cool, don't care to beat that country if they hear that Jan Chinn is running about on his tiger. It is supposed to be a clouded animal — not stripy, but blotchy, like a tortoise-shell tom-cat. No end of a brute, it is, and a sure sign of war or pestilence or — or something. There's a nice family legend for you."

"What's the origin of it, d' you suppose?" said Chinn.

"Ask the Satpura Bhils. Old Jan Chinn was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Perhaps it was the tiger's revenge, or perhaps he's huntin' 'em still. You must go to his tomb one of these days and inquire. Bukta will probably attend to that. He was asking me before you came whether by any ill-luck you had already bagged your tiger. If not, he is going to enter you under his own wing. Of course, for you of all men it's imperative. You'll have a first-class time with Bukta."

The Major was not wrong. Bukta kept an anxious eye on young Chinn at drill, and it was noticeable that the first time the new officer lifted up his voice in an order the whole line quivered. Even the Colonel was taken aback, for it might have been Lionel Chinn returned from Devonshire with a new lease of life. Bukta had continued to develop his peculiar theory among his intimates, and it was accepted as a matter of faith in the lines, since every word and gesture on young Chinn's part so confirmed it.

The old man arranged early that his darling should wipe out the reproach of not having shot a tiger; but he was not content to take the first or any beast that happened to arrive. In his own villages he dispensed the high, low, and middle justice, and when his people—naked and fluttered

— came to him with word of a beast marked down, he bade them send spies to the kills and the watering-places, that he might be sure the quarry was such an one as suited the dignity of such a man.

Three or four times the reckless trackers returned, most truthfully saying that the beast was mangy, undersized — a tigress worn with nursing, or a broken-toothed old male — and Bukta would curb young Chinn's impatience.

At last, a noble animal was marked down — a ten-foot cattle-killer with a huge roll of loose skin along the belly, glossy-hided, full-frilled about the neck, whiskered, frisky, and young. He had slain a man in pure sport, they said.

"Let him be fed," quoth Bukta, and the villagers dutifully drove out a cow to amuse him, that he might lie up near by.

Princes and potentates have taken ship to India and spent great moneys for the mere glimpse of beasts one-half as fine as this of Bukta's.

"It is not good," said he to the Colonel, when he asked for shooting-leave, "that my Colonel's son who may be — that my Colonel's son should lose his maidenhead on any small jungle beast. That may come after. I have waited long for this which is a tiger. He has come in from the Mair country. In seven days we will return with the skin."

The mess gnashed their teeth enviously. Bukta, had he chosen, might have invited them all. But he went out alone with Chinn, two days in a shooting-cart and a day on foot, till they came to a rocky, glary valley with a pool of good water in it. It was a parching day, and the boy very naturally stripped and went in for a bathe, leaving Bukta by the clothes. A white skin shows far against brown jungle, and what Bukta beheld on Chinn's back and right shoulder dragged him forward step by step with staring eyeballs.

"I'd forgotten it isn't decent to strip before a man of his position," said Chinn, flouncing in the water. "How the little devil stares! What is it, Bukta?"

"The Mark!" was the whispered answer.

"It is nothing. You know how it is with my people!" Chinn was annoyed. The dull-red birth-mark on his shoulder, something like a conventionalised Tartar cloud, had slipped his memory or he would not have bathed. It occurred, so they said at home, in alternate generations, appearing, curiously enough, eight or nine years after birth, and, save that it was part of the Chinn inheritance, would not be considered pretty. He hurried ashore, dressed again, and went on till they met two or three Bhils, who promptly fell on their faces. "My people," grunted Bukta, not

condescending to notice them. "And so your people, Sahib. When I was a young man we were fewer, but not so weak. Now we are many, but poor stock. As may be remembered. How will you shoot him, Sahib? From a tree; from a shelter which my people shall build; by day or by night?"

"On foot and in the daytime," said young Chinn.

"That was your custom, as I have heard," said Bukta to himself. "I will get news of him. Then you and I will go to him. I will carry one gun. You have yours. There is no need of more. What tiger shall stand against *thee?*"

He was marked down by a little water-hole at the head of a ravine, full-gorged and half asleep in the May sunlight. He was walked up like a partridge, and he turned to do battle for his life. Bukta made no motion to raise his rifle, but kept his eyes on Chinn, who met the shattering roar of the charge with a single shot — it seemed to him hours as he sighted — which tore through the throat, smashing the backbone below the neck and between the shoulders. The brute couched, choked, and fell, and before Chinn knew well what had happened Bukta bade him stay still while he paced the distance between his feet and the ringing jaws.

"Fifteen," said Bukta. "Short paces. No

need for a second shot, Sahib. He bleeds cleanly where he lies, and we need not spoil the skin. I said there would be no need of these, but they came — in case."

Suddenly the sides of the ravine were crowned with the heads of Bukta's people — a force that could have blown the ribs out of the beast had Chinn's shot failed; but their guns were hidden, and they appeared as interested beaters, some five or six waiting the word to skin. Bukta watched the life fade from the wild eyes, lifted one hand, and turned on his heel.

"No need to show that *we* care," said he. "Now, after this, we can kill what we choose. Put out your hand, Sahib."

Chinn obeyed. It was entirely steady, and Bukta nodded. "That also was your custom. My men skin quickly. They will carry the skin to cantonments. Will the Sahib come to my poor village for the night and, perhaps, forget that I am his officer?"

"But those men — the beaters. They have worked hard, and perhaps —"

"Oh, if they skin clumsily, we will skin them. They are my people. In the lines I am one thing. Here I am another."

This was very true. When Bukta doffed uniform and reverted to the fragmentary dress of his own people, he left his civilisation of drill in the

next world. That night, after a little talk with his subjects, he devoted to an orgie; and a Bhil orgie is a thing not to be safely written about. Chinn, flushed with triumph, was in the thick of it, but the meaning of the mysteries was hidden. Wild folk came and pressed about his knees with offerings. He gave his flask to the elders of the village. They grew eloquent, and wreathed him about with flowers. Gifts and loans, not all seemly, were thrust upon him, and infernal music rolled and maddened round red fires, while singers sang songs of the ancient times, and danced peculiar dances. The aboriginal liquors are very potent, and Chinn was compelled to taste them often, but, unless the stuff had been drugged, how came he to fall asleep suddenly, and to waken late the next day — half a march from the village?

"The Sahib was very tired. A little before dawn he went to sleep," Bukta explained. "My people carried him here, and now it is time we should go back to cantonments."

The voice, smooth and deferential, the step, steady and silent, made it hard to believe that only a few hours before Bukta was yelling and capering with naked fellow-devils of the scrub.

"My people were very pleased to see the Sahib. They will never forget. When next the Sahib goes out recruiting, he will go to my people, and they will give him as many men as we need."

Chinn kept his own counsel, except as to the shooting of the tiger, and Bukta embroidered that tale with a shameless tongue. The skin was certainly one of the finest ever hung up in the mess, and the first of many. When Bukta could not accompany his boy on shooting-trips, he took care to put him in good hands, and Chinn learned more of the mind and desire of the wild Bhil in his marches and campings, by talks at twilight or at wayside pools, than an uninstructed man could have come at in a lifetime.

Presently his men in the regiment grew bold to speak of their relatives — mostly in trouble — and to lay cases of tribal custom before him. They would say, squatting in his verandah at twilight, after the easy, confidential style of the Wuddars, that such-and-such a bachelor had run away with such-and-such a wife at a far-off village. Now, how many cows would Chinn Sahib consider a just fine? Or, again, if written order came from the Government that a Bhil was to repair to a walled city of the plains to give evidence in a law-court, would it be wise to disregard that order? On the other hand, if it were obeyed, would the rash voyager return alive?

"But what have I to do with these things?" Chinn demanded of Bukta, impatiently. "I am a soldier. I do not know the law."

"Hoo! Law is for fools and white men. Give

them a large and loud order, and they will abide by it. Thou art their law."

"But wherefore?"

Every trace of expression left Bukta's countenance. The idea might have smitten him for the first time. "How can I say?" he replied. "Perhaps it is on account of the name. A Bhil does not love strange things. Give them orders, Sahib — two, three, four words at a time such as they can carry away in their heads. That is enough."

Chinn gave orders then, valiantly, not realising that a word spoken in haste before mess became the dread unappealable law of villages beyond the smoky hills — was, in truth, no less than the Law of Jan Chinn the First, who, so the whispered legend ran, had come back to earth, to oversee the third generation, in the body and bones of his grandson.

There could be no sort of doubt in this matter. All the Bhils knew that Jan Chinn reincarnated had honoured Bukta's village with his presence after slaying his first — in this life — tiger; that he had eaten and drunk with the people, as he was used; and — Bukta must have drugged Chinn's liquor very deeply — upon his back and right shoulder all men had seen the same angry red Flying Cloud that the high Gods had set on the flesh of Jan Chinn the First when first he

came to the Bhil. As concerned the foolish white world which has no eyes, he was a slim and young officer in the Wuddars; but his own people knew he was Jan Chinn, who had made the Bhil a man: and, believing, they hastened to carry his words, careful never to alter them on the way.

Because the savage and the child who plays lonely games have one horror of being laughed at or questioned, the little folk kept their convictions to themselves; and the Colonel, who thought he knew his regiment, never guessed that each one of the six hundred quick-footed, beady-eyed rank-and-file, to attention beside their rifles, believed serenely and unshakenly that the subaltern on the left flank of the line was a demi-god twice born — tutelary deity of their land and people. The Earth-gods themselves had stamped the incarnation, and who would dare to doubt the handiwork of the Earth-gods?

Chinn, being practical above all things, saw that his family name served him well in the lines and in camp. His men gave no trouble — one does not commit regimental offences with a god in the chair of justice — and he was sure of the best beaters in the district when he needed them. They believed that the protection of Jan Chinn the First cloaked them, and were bold in that belief beyond the utmost daring of excited Bhils.

His quarters began to look like an amateur nat-

ural-history museum, in spite of duplicate heads and horns and skulls that he sent home to Devonshire. The people, very humanly, learned the weak side of their god. It is true he was unbribable, but bird-skins, butterflies, beetles, and, above all, news of big game pleased him. In other respects, too, he lived up to the Chinn tradition. He was fever-proof. A night's sitting out over a tethered goat in a damp valley, that would have filled the Major with a month's malaria, had no effect on him. He was, as they said, "salted before he was born."

Now in the autumn of his second year's service an uneasy rumour crept out of the earth and ran about among the Bhils. Chinn heard nothing of it till a brother-officer said across the mess-table: "Your revered ancestor's on the rampage in the Satpura country. You'd better look him up."

"I don't want to be disrespectful, but I'm a little sick of my revered ancestor. Bukta talks of nothing else. What's the old boy supposed to be doing now?"

"Riding cross-country by moonlight on his processional tiger. That's the story. He's been seen by about two thousand Bhils, skipping along the tops of the Satpuras, and scaring people to death. They believe it devoutly, and all the Satpura chaps are worshipping away at his shrine — tomb, I mean — like good uns. You really

ought to go down there. Must be a queer thing to see your grandfather treated as a god."

"What makes you think there's any truth in the tale?" said Chinn.

"Because all our men deny it. They say they've never heard of Chinn's tiger. Now that's a manifest lie, because every Bhil *has*."

"There's only one thing you've overlooked," said the Colonel, thoughtfully. "When a local god reappears on earth, it's always an excuse for trouble of some kind; and those Satpura Bhils are about as wild as your grandfather left them, young un. It means something."

"Meanin' they may go on the war-path?" said Chinn.

"'Can't say — as yet. 'Shouldn't be surprised a little bit."

"I haven't been told a syllable."

"'Proves it all the more. They are keeping something back."

"Bukta tells me everything, too, as a rule. Now, why didn't he tell me that?"

Chinn put the question directly to the old man that night, and the answer surprised him.

"Why should I tell what is well known? Yes, the Clouded Tiger is out in the Satpura country."

"What do the wild Bhils think that it means?"

"They do not know. They wait. Sahib, what is coming? Say only one little word, and we will be content."

"We? What have tales from the south, where the jungly Bhils live, to do with drilled men?"

"When Jan Chinn wakes is no time for any Bhil to be quiet."

"But he has not waked, Bukta."

"Sahib"—the old man's eyes were full of tender reproof—"if he does not wish to be seen, why does he go abroad in the moonlight? We know he is awake, but we do not know what he desires. Is it a sign for all the Bhils, or one that concerns the Satpura folk alone? Say one little word, Sahib, that I may carry it to the lines, and send on to our villages. Why does Jan Chinn ride out? Who has done wrong? Is it pestilence? Is it murrain? Will our children die? Is it a sword? Remember, Sahib, we are thy people and thy servants, and in this life I bore thee in my arms—not knowing."

"Bukta has evidently looked on the cup this evening," Chinn thought; "but if I can do anything to soothe the old chap I must. It's like the Mutiny rumours on a small scale."

He dropped into a deep wicker chair, over which was thrown his first tiger-skin, and his weight on the cushion flapped the clawed paws

over his shoulders. He laid hold of them mechanically as he spoke, drawing the painted hide, cloak-fashion, about him.

"Now will I tell the truth, Bukta," he said, leaning forward, the dried muzzle on his shoulder, to invent a specious lie.

"I see that it is the truth," was the answer, in a shaking voice.

"Jan Chinn goes abroad among the Satpuras, riding on the Clouded Tiger, ye say? Be it so. Therefore the sign of the wonder is for the Satpura Bhils only, and does not touch the Bhils who plough in the north and east, the Bhils of the Khandesh, or any others, except the Satpura Bhils, who, as we know, are wild and foolish."

"It is, then, a sign for *them*. Good or bad?"

"Beyond doubt, good. For why should Jan Chinn make evil to those whom he has made men? The nights over yonder are hot; it is ill to lie in one bed over-long without turning, and Jan Chinn would look again upon his people. So he rises, whistles his Clouded Tiger, and goes abroad a little to breathe the cool air. If the Satpura Bhils kept to their villages, and did not wander after dark, they would not see him. Indeed, Bukta, it is no more than that he would see the light again in his own country. Send this news south, and say that it is my word."

Bukta bowed to the floor. "Good Heavens!"

thought Chinn, "and this blinking pagan is a first-class officer, and as straight as a die! I may as well round it off neatly." He went on:

"If the Satpura Bhils ask the meaning of the sign, tell them that Jan Chinn would see how they kept their old promises of good living. Perhaps they have plundered; perhaps they mean to disobey the orders of the Government; perhaps there is a dead man in the jungle; and so Jan Chinn has come to see."

"Is he, then, angry?"

"Bah! Am *I* ever angry with my Bhils? I say angry words, and threaten many things. *Thou* knowest, Bukta. I have seen thee smile behind the hand. I know, and thou knowest. The Bhils are my children. I have said it many times."

"Ay. We be thy children," said Bukta.

"And no otherwise is it with Jan Chinn, my father's father. He would see the land he loved and the people once again. It is a good ghost, Bukta. I say it. Go and tell them. And I do hope devoutly," he added, "that it will calm 'em down." Flinging back the tiger-skin, he rose with a long, unguarded yawn that showed his well-kept teeth.

Bukta fled, to be received in the lines by a knot of panting inquirers.

"It is true," said Bukta. "He wrapped him-

self in the skin, and spoke from it. He would see his own country again. The sign is not for us; and, indeed, he is a young man. How should he lie idle of nights? He says his bed is too hot and the air is bad. He goes to and fro for the love of night-running. He has said it."

The grey-whiskered assembly shuddered.

"He says the Bhils are his children. Ye know he does not lie. He has said it to me."

"But what of the Satpura Bhils? What means the sign for them?"

"Nothing. It is only night-running, as I have said. He rides to see if they obey the Government, as he taught them to do in his first life."

"And what if they do not?"

"He did not say."

The light went out in Chinn's quarters.

"Look," said Bukta. "Now he goes away. None the less it is a good ghost, as he has said. How shall we fear Jan Chinn, who made the Bhil a man? His protection is on us; and ye know Jan Chinn never broke a protection spoken or written on paper. When he is older and has found him a wife he will lie in his bed till morning."

A commanding officer is generally aware of the regimental state of mind a little before the men; and this is why the Colonel said, a few days later, that some one had been putting the Fear of God into the Wuddars. As he was the only person

officially entitled to do this, it distressed him to see such unanimous virtue. "It's too good to last," he said. "I only wish I could find out what the little chaps mean."

The explanation, as it seemed to him, came at the change of the moon, when he received orders to hold himself in readiness to "allay any possible excitement" among the Satpura Bhils, who were, to put it mildly, uneasy because a paternal Government had sent up against them a Mahratta State-educated vaccinator, with lancets, lymph, and an officially registered calf. In the language of State, they had "manifested a strong objection to all prophylactic measures," had "forcibly detained the vaccinator," and "were on the point of neglecting or evading their tribal obligations."

"That means they are in a blue funk — same as they were at census-time," said the Colonel; "and if we stampede them into the hills we'll never catch 'em, in the first place, and, in the second, they'll whoop off plundering till further orders. 'Wonder who the God-forsaken idiot is who is trying to vaccinate a Bhil. I knew trouble was coming. One good thing is that they'll only use local corps, and we can knock up something we'll call a campaign, and let them down easy. Fancy us potting our best beaters because they don't want to be vaccinated! They're only crazy with fear."

"Don't you think, sir," said Chinn, the next day, "that perhaps you could give me a fortnight's shooting-leave?"

"Desertion in the face of the enemy, by Jove!" The Colonel laughed. "I might, but I'd have to antedate it a little, because we're warned for service, as you might say. However, we'll assume that you applied for leave three days ago, and are now well on your way south."

"I'd like to take Bukta with me."

"Of course, yes. I think that will be the best plan. You've some kind of hereditary influence with the little chaps, and they may listen to you when a glimpse of our uniforms would drive them wild. You've never been in that part of the world before, have you? Take care they don't send you to your family vault in your youth and innocence. I believe you'll be all right if you can get 'em to listen to you."

"I think so, sir; but if — if they should accidentally put an — make asses of 'emselves — they might, you know — I hope you'll represent that they were only frightened. There isn't an ounce of real vice in 'em, and I should never forgive myself if any one of — of my name got them into trouble."

The Colonel nodded, but said nothing.

Chinn and Bukta departed at once. Bukta did not say that, ever since the official vaccinator had

been dragged into the hills by indignant Bhils, runner after runner had skulked up to the lines, entreating, with forehead in the dust, that Jan Chinn should come and explain this unknown horror that hung over his people.

The portent of the Clouded Tiger was now too clear. Let Jan Chinn comfort his own, for vain was the help of mortal man. Bukta toned down these beseechings to a simple request for Chinn's presence. Nothing would have pleased the old man better than a rough-and-tumble campaign against the Satpuras, whom he, as an "unmixed" Bhil, despised; but he had a duty to all his nation as Jan Chinn's interpreter; and he devoutly believed that forty plagues would fall on his village if he tampered with that obligation. Besides, Jan Chinn knew all things, and he rode the Clouded Tiger.

They covered thirty miles a day on foot and pony, raising the blue wall-like line of the Satpuras as swiftly as might be. Bukta was very silent.

They began the steep climb a little after noon, but it was near sunset ere they reached the stone platform clinging to the side of a rifted, jungle-covered hill, where Jan Chinn the First was laid, as he had desired, that he might overlook his people. All India is full of neglected graves that date from the beginning of the eighteenth century — tombs of forgotten colonels of corps long since

disbanded; mates of East Indiamen who went on shooting expeditions and never came back; factors, agents, writers, and ensigns of the Honourable the East India Company by hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands. English folk forget quickly, but natives have long memories, and if a man has done good in his life it is remembered after his death. The weathered marble four-square tomb of Jan Chinn was hung about with wild flowers and nuts, packets of wax and honey, bottles of native spirits, and infamous cigars, with buffalo horns and plumes of dried grass. At one end was a rude clay image of a white man, in the old-fashioned top-hat, riding on a bloated tiger.

Bukta salamed reverently as they approached. Chinn bared his head and began to pick out the blurred inscription. So far as he could read it ran thus — word for word, and letter for letter:

To the Memory of John Chinn, Esq.
Late Collector of . . . . . .
. . . . ithout Bloodshed or . . . error of Authority
Employ . only . . eans of Conciliat . . . and Confiden .
accomplished the . . . tire Subjection . . .
a Lawless and Predatory Peop . . .
. . . . taching them to . . . . ish Government
by a Conquest over . . . . Minds
The most perma . . . and rational Mode of Domini . .
. . . Governor General and Counc . . . engal
have ordered thi . . . . . erected
. . . arted this Life Aug. 19, 184 . . Ag . . .

On the other side of the grave were ancient verses, also very worn. As much as Chinn could decipher said:

. . . . the savage band
Forsook their Haunts and b . . . . is Command
. . . . mended . . rals check a . . . st for spoil
And . s . ing Hamlets prove his gene . . . . toil
Humanit . . . survey . . . . . ights restore . .
A Nation . . ield . . subdued without a Sword.

For some little time he leaned on the tomb thinking of this dead man of his own blood, and of the house in Devonshire; then, nodding to the plains: "Yes; it's a big work — all of it — even my little share. He must have been worth knowing. . . . Bukta, where are my people?"

"Not here, Sahib. No man comes here except in full sun. They wait above. Let us climb and see."

But Chinn, remembering the first law of Oriental diplomacy, in an even voice answered: "I have come this far only because the Satpura folk are foolish, and dared not visit our lines. Now bid them wait on me *here*. I am not a servant, but the master of Bhils."

"I go — I go," clucked the old man. Night was falling, and at any moment Jan Chinn might whistle up his dreaded steed from the darkening scrub.

Now for the first time in a long life Bukta dis-

obeyed a lawful command and deserted his leader; for he did not come back, but pressed to the flat table-top of the hill, and called softly. Men stirred all about him — little trembling men with bows and arrows who had watched the two since noon.

"Where is he?" whispered one.

"At his own place. He bids you come," said Bukta.

"Now?"

"Now."

"Rather let him loose the Clouded Tiger upon us. We do not go."

"Nor I, though I bore him in my arms when he was a child in this his life. Wait here till the day."

"But surely he will be angry."

"He will be very angry, for he has nothing to eat. But he has said to me many times that the Bhils are his children. By sunlight I believe this, but — by moonlight I am not so sure. What folly have ye Satpura pigs compassed that ye should need him at all?"

"One came to us in the name of the Government with little ghost-knives and a magic calf, meaning to turn us into cattle by the cutting off of our arms. We were greatly afraid, but we did not kill the man. He is here, bound — a black man; and we think he comes from the west. He said it was an order to cut us all with knives —

especially the women and the children. We did not hear that it was an order, so we were afraid, and kept to our hills. Some of our men have taken ponies and bullocks from the plains, and others pots and cloths and ear-rings."

"Are any slain?"

"By our men? Not yet. But the young men are blown to and fro by many rumours like flames upon a hill. I sent runners asking for Jan Chinn lest worse should come to us. It was this fear that he foretold by the sign of the Clouded Tiger."

"He says it is otherwise," said Bukta; and he repeated, with amplifications, all that young Chinn had told him at the conference of the wicker chair.

"Think you," said the questioner, at last, "that the Government will lay hands on us?"

"Not I," Bukta rejoined. "Jan Chinn will give an order, and ye will obey. The rest is between the Government and Jan Chinn. I myself know something of the ghost-knives and the scratching. It is a charm against the Small-pox. But how it is done I cannot tell. Nor need that concern you."

"If he stands by us and before the anger of the Government we will most strictly obey Jan Chinn, except — except we do not go down to that place to-night."

They could hear young Chinn below them

shouting for Bukta; but they cowered and sat still, expecting the Clouded Tiger. The tomb had been holy ground for nearly half a century. If Jan Chinn chose to sleep there, who had better right? But they would not come within eyeshot of the place till broad day.

At first Chinn was exceedingly angry, till it occurred to him that Bukta most probably had a reason (which, indeed, he had), and his own dignity might suffer if he yelled without answer. He propped himself against the foot of the grave, and, alternately dozing and smoking, came through the warm night proud that he was a lawful, legitimate, fever-proof Chinn.

He prepared his plan of action much as his grandfather would have done; and when Bukta appeared in the morning with a most liberal supply of food, said nothing of the overnight desertion. Bukta would have been relieved by an outburst of human anger; but Chinn finished his victual leisurely, and a cheroot, ere he made any sign.

"They are very much afraid," said Bukta, who was not too bold himself. "It remains only to give orders. They said they will obey if thou wilt only stand between them and the Government."

"That I know," said Chinn, strolling slowly to the table-land. A few of the elder men stood in

an irregular semicircle in an open glade; but the ruck of people — women and children —were hidden in the thicket. They had no desire to face the first anger of Jan Chinn the First.

Seating himself on a fragment of split rock, he smoked his cheroot to the butt, hearing men breathe hard all about him. Then he cried, so suddenly that they jumped:

"Bring the man that was bound!"

A scuffle and a cry were followed by the appearance of a Hindoo vaccinator, quaking with fear, bound hand and foot, as the Bhils of old were accustomed to bind their human sacrifices. He was pushed cautiously before the presence; but young Chinn did not look at him.

"I said — the man that *was* bound. Is it a jest to bring me one tied like a buffalo? Since when could the Bhil bind folk at his pleasure? Cut!"

Half a dozen hasty knives cut away the thongs, and the man crawled to Chinn, who pocketed his case of lancets and tubes of lymph. Then, sweeping the semicircle with one comprehensive forefinger, and in the voice of compliment, he said, clearly and distinctly: "Pigs!"

"Ai!" whispered Bukta. "Now he speaks. Woe to foolish people!"

"I have come on foot from my house" (the assembly shuddered) "to make clear a matter which any other than a Satpura Bhil would have seen

with both eyes from a distance. Ye know the Small-pox, who pits and scars your children so that they look like wasp-combs. It is an order of the Government that whoso is scratched on the arm with these little knives which I hold up is charmed against Her. All Sahibs are thus charmed, and very many Hindoos. This is the mark of the charm. Look!"

He rolled back his sleeve to the armpit and showed the white scars of the vaccination-mark on the white skin. "Come, all, and look."

A few daring spirits came up, and nodded their heads wisely. There was certainly a mark, and they knew well what other dread marks were hidden by the shirt. Merciful was Jan Chinn, that he had not then and there proclaimed his godhead!

"Now all these things the man whom ye bound told you."

"I did — a hundred times; but they answered with blows," groaned the operator, chafing his wrists and ankles.

"But, being pigs, ye did not believe; and so came I here to save you, first from Small-pox, next from a great folly of fear, and lastly, it may be, from the rope and the jail. It is no gain to me; it is no pleasure to me: but for the sake of that one who is yonder, who made the Bhil a man" — he pointed down the hill — "I, who am of his

blood, the son of his son, come to turn your people And I speak the truth, as did Jan Chinn."

The crowd murmured reverently, and men stole out of the thicket by twos and threes to join it. There was no anger in their god's face.

"These are my orders. (Heaven send they'll take 'em, but I seem to have impressed 'em so far!) I myself will stay among you while this man scratches your arms with the knives, after the order of the Government. In three, or it may be five or seven, days, your arms will swell and itch and burn. That is the power of Small-pox fighting in your base blood against the orders of the Government. I will therefore stay among you till I see that Small-pox is conquered, and I will not go away till the men and the women and the little children show me upon their arms such marks as I have even now showed you. I bring with me two very good guns, and a man whose name is known among beasts and men. We will hunt together, I and he and your young men, and the others shall eat and lie still. This is my order."

There was a long pause while victory hung in the balance. A white-haired old sinner, standing on one uneasy leg, piped up:

"There are ponies and some few bullocks and other things for which we need a *kowl* [protection]. They were *not* taken in the way of trade."

The battle was won, and John Chinn drew a

breath of relief. The young Bhils had been raiding, but if taken swiftly all could be put straight.

"I will write a *kowl* so soon as the ponies, the bullocks, and the other things are counted before me and sent back whence they came. But first we will put the Government mark on such as have not been visited by Small-pox." In an undertone, to the vaccinator: "If you show you are afraid you'll never see Poona again, my friend."

"There is not sufficient ample supply of vaccine for all this population," said the man. "They have destroyed the offeecial calf."

"They won't know the difference. Scrape 'em all round, and give me a couple of lancets; I'll attend to the elders."

The aged diplomat who had demanded protection was the first victim. He fell to Chinn's hand, and dared not cry out. As soon as he was freed he dragged up a companion, and held him fast, and the crisis became, as it were, a child's sport; for the vaccinated chased the unvaccinated to treatment, vowing that all the tribe must suffer equally. The women shrieked, and the children ran howling; but Chinn laughed, and waved the pink-tipped lancet.

"It is an honour," he cried. "Tell them, Bukta, how great an honour it is that I myself should mark them. Nay, I cannot mark every

one — the Hindoo must also do his work — but I will touch all marks that he makes, so there will be an equal virtue in them. Thus do the Rajputs stick pigs. Ho, brother with one eye! Catch that girl and bring her to me. She need not run away yet, for she is not married, and I do not seek her in marriage. She will not come? Then she shall be shamed by her little brother, a fat boy, a bold boy. He puts out his arm like a soldier. Look! *He* does not flinch at the blood. Some day he shall be in my regiment. And now, mother of many, we will lightly touch thee, for Small-pox has been before us here. It is a true thing, indeed, that this charm breaks the power of Mata. There will be no more pitted faces among the Satpuras, and so ye can ask many cows for each maid to be wed."

And so on and so on — quick-poured showman's patter, sauced in the Bhil hunting-proverbs and tales of their own brand of coarse humour — till the lancets were blunted and both operators worn out.

But, nature being the same the world over, the unvaccinated grew jealous of their marked comrades, and came near to blows about it. Then Chinn declared himself a court of justice, no longer a medical board, and made formal inquiry into the late robberies.

"We are the thieves of Mahadeo," said the

Bhils, simply. "It is our fate, and we were frightened. When we are frightened we always steal."

Simply and directly as children, they gave in the tale of the plunder, all but two bullocks and some spirits that had gone amissing (these Chinn promised to make good out of his own pocket), and ten ringleaders were despatched to the lowlands with a wonderful document, written on the leaf of a note-book, and addressed to an Assistant District Superintendent of Police. There was warm calamity in that note, as Jan Chinn warned them, but anything was better than loss of liberty.

Armed with this protection, the repentant raiders went down-hill. They had no desire whatever to meet Mr. Dundas Fawne of the Police, aged twenty-two, and of a cheerful countenance, nor did they wish to revisit the scene of their robberies. Steering a middle course, they ran into the camp of the one Government chaplain allowed to the various irregular corps through a district of some fifteen thousand square miles, and stood before him in a cloud of dust. He was by way of being a priest, they knew, and, what was more to the point, a good sportsman who paid his beaters generously.

When he read Chinn's note he laughed, which they deemed a lucky omen, till he called up policemen, who tethered the ponies and the bullocks by the piled house-gear, and laid stern hands upon

three of that smiling band of the thieves of Mahadeo. The chaplain himself addressed them magisterially with a riding-whip. That was painful, but Jan Chinn had prophesied it. They submitted, but would not give up the written protection, fearing the jail. On their way back they met Mr. D. Fawne, who had heard about the robberies, and was not pleased.

"Certainly," said the eldest of the gang, when the second interview was at an end, "certainly Jan Chinn's protection has saved us our liberty, but it is as though there were many beatings in one small piece of paper. Put it away."

One climbed into a tree, and stuck the letter into a cleft forty feet from the ground, where it could do no harm. Warmed, sore, but happy, the ten returned to Jan Chinn next day, where he sat among uneasy Bhils, all looking at their right arms, and all bound under terror of their god's disfavour not to scratch.

"It was a good *kowl*," said the leader. "First the chaplain, who laughed, took away our plunder, and beat three of us, as was promised. Next, we meet Fawne Sahib, who frowned, and asked for the plunder. We spoke the truth, and so he beat us all, one after another, and called us chosen names. He then gave us these two bundles"—they set down a bottle of whisky and a box of cheroots—"and we came away. The *kowl* is left

in a tree, because its virtue is that so soon as we show it to a Sahib we are beaten."

"But for that *kowl*," said Jan Chinn, sternly, "ye would all have been marching to jail with a policeman on either side. Ye come now to serve as beaters for me. These people are unhappy, and we will go hunting till they are well. To-night we will make a feast."

It is written in the chronicles of the Satpura Bhils, together with many other matters not fit for print, that through five days, after the day that he had put his mark upon them, Jan Chinn the First hunted for his people; and on the five nights of those days the tribe was gloriously and entirely drunk. Jan Chinn bought country spirits of an awful strength, and slew wild pig and deer beyond counting, so that if any fell sick they might have two good reasons.

Between head- and stomach-aches they found no time to think of their arms, but followed Jan Chinn obediently through the jungles, and with each day's returning confidence men, women, and children stole away to their villages as the little army passed by. They carried news that it was good and right to be scratched with ghost-knives; that Jan Chinn was indeed reincarnated as a god of free food and drink, and that of all nations the Satpura Bhils stood first in his favour, if they would only refrain from scratching. Hencefor-

ward that kindly demi-god would be connected in their minds with great gorgings and the vaccine and lancets of a paternal Government.

"And to-morrow I go back to my home," said Jan Chinn to his faithful few, whom neither spirits, overeating, nor swollen glands could conquer. It is hard for children and savages to behave reverently at all times to the idols of their make-belief, and they had frolicked excessively with Jan Chinn. But the reference to his home cast a gloom on the people.

"And the Sahib will not come again?" said he who had been vaccinated first.

"That is to be seen," answered Chinn, warily.

"Nay, but come as a white man — come as a young man whom we know and love; for, as thou alone knowest, we are a weak people. If we again saw thy — thy horse —" They were picking up their courage.

"I have no horse. I came on foot — with Bukta, yonder. What is this?"

"Thou knowest — the thing that thou hast chosen for a night-horse." The little men squirmed in fear and awe.

"Night-horses? Bukta, what is this last tale of children?"

Bukta had been a silent leader in Chinn's presence since the night of his desertion, and was grateful for a chance-flung question.

"They know, Sahib," he whispered. "It is the Clouded Tiger. That that comes from the place where thou didst once sleep. It is thy horse — as it has been these three generations."

"My horse! That was a dream of the Bhils."

"It is no dream. Do dreams leave the tracks of broad pugs on earth? Why make two faces before thy people? They know of the night-ridings, and they — and they —"

"Are afraid, and would have them cease."

Bukta nodded. "If thou hast no further need of him. He is thy horse."

"The thing leaves a trail, then?" said Chinn.

"We have seen it. It is like a village road under the tomb."

"Can ye find and follow it for me?"

"By daylight — if one comes with us, and, above all, stands near by."

"I will stand close, and we will see to it that Jan Chinn does not ride any more."

The Bhils shouted the last words again and again.

From Chinn's point of view the stalk was nothing more than an ordinary one — down-hill, through split and crannied rocks, unsafe, perhaps, if a man did not keep his wits by him, but no worse than twenty others he had undertaken. Yet his men — they refused absolutely to beat, and would only trail — dripped sweat at every move.

They showed the marks of enormous pugs that ran, always down-hill, to a few hundred feet below Jan Chinn's tomb, and disappeared in a narrow-mouthed cave. It was an insolently open road, a domestic highway, beaten without thought of concealment.

"The beggar might be paying rent and taxes," Chinn muttered ere he asked whether his friend's taste ran to cattle or man.

"Cattle," was the answer. "Two heifers a week. We drive them for him at the foot of the hill. It is his custom. If we did not, he might seek us."

"Blackmail and piracy," said Chinn. "I can't say I fancy going into the cave after him. What's to be done?"

The Bhils fell back as Chinn lodged himself behind a rock with his rifle ready. Tigers, he knew, were shy beasts, but one who had been long cattle-fed in this sumptuous style might prove overbold.

"He speaks!" some one whispered from the rear. "He knows, too."

"Well, of *all* the infernal cheek!" said Chinn. There was an angry growl from the cave — a direct challenge.

"Come out, then," Chinn shouted. "Come out of that. Let's have a look at you."

The brute knew well enough that there was

some connection between brown nude Bhils and his weekly allowance; but the white helmet in the sunlight annoyed him, and he did not approve of the voice that broke his rest. Lazily as a gorged snake, he dragged himself out of the cave, and stood yawning and blinking at the entrance. The sunlight fell upon his flat right side, and Chinn wondered. Never had he seen a tiger marked after this fashion. Except for his head, which was staringly barred, he was dappled — not striped, but dappled like a child's rocking-horse in rich shades of smoky black on red gold. That portion of his belly and throat which should have been white was orange, and his tail and paws were black.

He looked leisurely for some ten seconds, and then deliberately lowered his head, his chin dropped and drawn in, staring intently at the man. The effect of this was to throw forward the round arch of his skull, with two broad bands across it, while below the bands glared the unwinking eyes; so that, head on, as he stood, he showed something like a diabolically scowling pantomime-mask. It was a piece of natural mesmerism that he had practised many times on his quarry, and though Chinn was by no means a terrified heifer, he stood for a while, held by the extraordinary oddity of the attack. The head — the body seemed to have been packed away behind it — the ferocious,

skull-like head, crept nearer to the switching of an angry tail-tip in the grass. Left and right the Bhils had scattered to let John Chinn subdue his own horse.

"My word!" he thought. "He's trying to frighten me!" and fired between the saucer-like eyes, leaping aside upon the shot.

A big coughing mass, reeking of carrion, bounded past him up the hill, and he followed discreetly. The tiger made no attempt to turn into the jungle; he was hunting for sight and breath — nose up, mouth open, the tremendous fore-legs scattering the gravel in spurts.

"Scuppered!" said John Chinn, watching the flight. "Now if he was a partridge he'd tower. Lungs must be full of blood."

The brute had jerked himself over a boulder and fallen out of sight the other side. John Chinn looked over with a ready barrel. But the red trail led straight as an arrow even to his grandfather's tomb, and there, among the smashed spirit-bottles and the fragments of the mud image, the life left, with a flurry and a grunt.

"If my worthy ancestor could see that," said John Chinn, "he'd have been proud of me. Eyes, lower jaw, and lungs. A very nice shot." He whistled for Bukta as he drew the tape over the stiffening bulk.

"Ten — six — eight — by Jove! It's nearly

eleven — call it eleven. Fore-arm, twenty-four — five — seven and a half. A short tail, too: three feet one. But *what* a skin! Oh, Bukta! Bukta! The men with the knives swiftly."

"Is he beyond question dead?" said an awe-stricken voice behind a rock.

"That was not the way I killed my first tiger," said Chinn. "I did not think that Bukta would run. I had no second gun."

"It — it is the Clouded Tiger," said Bukta, unheeding the taunt. "He is dead."

Whether all the Bhils, vaccinated and unvaccinated, of the Satpuras had lain by to see the kill, Chinn could not say; but the whole hill's flank rustled with little men, shouting, singing, and stamping. And yet, till he had made the first cut in the splendid skin, not a man would take a knife; and, when the shadows fell, they ran from the red-stained tomb, and no persuasion would bring them back till dawn. So Chinn spent a second night in the open, guarding the carcass from jackals, and thinking about his ancestor.

He returned to the lowlands to the triumphal chant of an escorting army three hundred strong, the Mahratta vaccinator close at his elbow, and the rudely dried skin a trophy before him. When that army suddenly and noiselessly disappeared, as quail in high corn, he argued he was near civilisation, and a turn in the road brought him upon the

camp of a wing of his own corps. He left the skin on a cart-tail for the world to see, and sought the Colonel.

"They're perfectly right," he explained earnestly. "There isn't an ounce of vice in 'em. They were only frightened. I've vaccinated the whole boiling, and they like it awfully. What are — what are we doing here, sir?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," said the Colonel. "I don't know yet whether we're a piece of a brigade or a police force. However, I think we'll call ourselves a police force. How did you manage to get a Bhil vaccinated?"

"Well, sir," said Chinn, "I've been thinking it over, and, as far as I can make out, I've got a sort of hereditary influence over 'em."

"So I know, or I wouldn't have sent you; but *what*, exactly?"

"It's rather rummy. It seems, from what I can make out, that I'm my own grandfather reincarnated, and I've been disturbing the peace of the country by riding a pad-tiger of nights. If I hadn't done that, I don't think they'd have objected to the vaccination; but the two together were more than they could stand. And so, sir, I've vaccinated 'em, and shot my tiger-horse as a sort o' proof of good faith. You never saw such a skin in your life."

The Colonel tugged his moustache thought-

fully. "Now, how the deuce," said he, "am I to include that in my report?"

Indeed, the official version of the Bhils' anti-vaccination stampede said nothing about Lieutenant John Chinn, his godship. But Bukta knew, and the corps knew, and every Bhil in the Satpura hills knew.

And now Bukta is zealous that John Chinn shall swiftly be wedded and impart his powers to a son; for if the Chinn succession fails, and the little Bhils are left to their own imaginings, there will be fresh trouble in the Satpuras.

"BREAD UPON THE WATERS"

"BREAD UPON THE WATERS"

If you remember my improper friend Brugglesmith, you will also bear in mind his friend McPhee, Chief Engineer of the *Breslau*, whose dinghy Brugglesmith tried to steal. His apologies for the performances of Brugglesmith may one day be told in their proper place: the tale before us concerns McPhee. He was never a racing engineer, and took special pride in saying as much before the Liverpool men; but he had a thirty-two years' knowledge of machinery and the humours of ships. One side of his face had been wrecked through the bursting of a pressure-gauge in the days when men knew less than they do now, and his nose rose grandly out of the wreck, like a club in a public riot. There were cuts and lumps on his head, and he would guide your forefinger through his short iron-grey hair and tell you how he had come by his trade-marks. He owned all sorts of certificates of extra-competency, and at the bottom of his cabin chest of drawers, where he kept the photograph of his wife, were two or three Royal Humane Society medals for saving lives at

sea. Professionally — it was different when crazy steerage passengers jumped overboard — professionally, McPhee does not approve of saving life at sea, and he has often told me that a new Hell awaits stokers and trimmers who sign for a strong man's pay and fall sick the second day out. He believes in throwing boots at fourth and fifth engineers when they wake him up at night with word that a bearing is red-hot, all because a lamp's glare is reflected red from the twirling metal. He believes that there are only two poets in the world; one being Robert Burns, of course, and the other Gerald Massey. When he has time for novels he reads Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade — chiefly the latter — and knows whole pages of "Very Hard Cash" by heart. In the saloon his table is next to the captain's, and he drinks only water while his engines work.

He was good to me when we first met, because I did not ask questions, and believed in Charles Reade as a most shamefully neglected author. Later he approved of my writings to the extent of one pamphlet of twenty-four pages that I wrote for Holdock, Steiner & Chase, owners of the line, when they bought some ventilating patent and fitted it to the cabins of the *Breslau*, *Spandau*, and *Koltzau*. The purser of the *Breslau* recommended me to Holdock's secretary for the job; and Holdock, who is a Wesleyan Methodist, invited me

to his house, and gave me dinner with the governess when the others had finished, and placed the plans and specifications in my hand, and I wrote the pamphlet that same afternoon. It was called "Comfort in the Cabin," and brought me seven pound ten, cash down — an important sum of money in those days; and the governess, who was teaching Master John Holdock his scales, told me that Mrs. Holdock had told her to keep an eye on me, in case I went away with coats from the hat-rack. McPhee liked that pamphlet enormously, for it was composed in the Bouverie-Byzantine style, with baroque and rococo embellishments; and afterwards he introduced me to Mrs. McPhee, who succeeded Dinah in my heart; for Dinah was half a world away, and it is wholesome and antiseptic to love such a woman as Janet McPhee. They lived in a little twelve-pound house, close to the shipping. When McPhee was away Mrs. McPhee read the Lloyds column in the papers, and called on the wives of senior engineers of equal social standing. Once or twice, too, Mrs. Holdock visited Mrs. McPhee in a brougham with celluloid fittings, and I have reason to believe that, after she had played owner's wife long enough, they talked scandal. The Holdocks lived in an old-fashioned house with a big brick garden not a mile from the McPhees, for they stayed by their money as their money

stayed by them; and in summer you met their brougham solemnly junketing by Theydon Bois or Loughton. But I was Mrs. McPhee's friend, for she allowed me to convoy her westward, sometimes, to theatres where she sobbed or laughed or shivered with a simple heart; and she introduced me to a new world of doctors' wives, captains' wives, and engineers' wives, whose whole talk and thought centred in and about ships and lines of ships you have never heard of. There were sailing-ships, with stewards and mahogany and maple saloons, trading to Australia, taking cargoes of consumptives and hopeless drunkards for whom a sea-voyage was recommended; there were frowzy little West African boats, full of rats and cockroaches, where men died anywhere but in their bunks; there were Brazilian boats whose cabins could be hired for merchandise, that went out loaded nearly awash; there were Zanzibar and Mauritius steamers and wonderful reconstructed boats that plied to the other side of Borneo. These were loved and known, for they earned our bread and a little butter, and we despised the big Atlantic boats, and made fun of the P. & O. and Orient liners, and swore by our respective owners — Wesleyan, Baptist, or Presbyterian, as the case might be.

I had only just come back to England when Mrs. McPhee invited me to dinner at three

o'clock in the afternoon, and the notepaper was almost bridal in its scented creaminess. When I reached the house I saw that there were new curtains in the window that must have cost forty-five shillings a pair; and as Mrs. McPhee drew me into the little marble-papered hall, she looked at me keenly, and cried:

"Have ye not heard? What d' ye think o' the hat-rack?"

Now, that hat-rack was oak — thirty shillings, at least. McPhee came down-stairs with a sober foot — he steps as lightly as a cat, for all his weight, when he is at sea — and shook hands in a new and awful manner — a parody of old Holdock's style when he says good-bye to his skippers. I perceived at once that a legacy had come to him, but I held my peace, though Mrs. McPhee begged me every thirty seconds to eat a great deal and say nothing. It was rather a mad sort of meal, because McPhee and his wife took hold of hands like little children (they always do after voyages), and nodded and winked and choked and gurgled, and hardly ate a mouthful.

A female servant came in and waited; though Mrs. McPhee had told me time and again that she would thank no one to do her housework while she had her health. But this was a servant with a cap, and I saw Mrs. McPhee swell and swell under her *garance*-coloured gown. There is no small

free-board to Janet McPhee, nor is *garance* any subdued tint; and with all this unexplained pride and glory in the air I felt like watching fireworks without knowing the festival. When the maid had removed the cloth she brought a pineapple that would have cost half a guinea at that season (only McPhee has his own way of getting such things), and a Canton china bowl of dried lichis, and a glass plate of preserved ginger, and a small jar of sacred and Imperial chow-chow that perfumed the room. McPhee gets it from a Dutchman in Java, and I think he doctors it with liqueurs. But the crown of the feast was some Madeira of the kind you can only come by if you know the wine and the man. A little maize-wrapped fig of clotted Madeira cigars went with the wine, and the rest was a pale-blue smoky silence; Janet, in her splendour, smiling on us two, and patting McPhee's hand.

"We'll drink," said McPhee, slowly, rubbing his chin, "to the eternal damnation o' Holdock, Steiner & Chase."

Of course I answered "Amen," though I had made seven pound ten shillings out of the firm. McPhee's enemies were mine, and I was drinking his Madeira.

"Ye've heard nothing?" said Janet. "Not a word, not a whisper?"

"Not a word, nor a whisper. On my word, I have not."

"Tell him, Mac," said she; and that is another proof of Janet's goodness and wifely love. A smaller woman would have babbled first, but Janet is five feet nine in her stockings.

"We're rich," said McPhee. I shook hands all round.

"We're damned rich," he added. I shook hands all round a second time.

"I'll go to sea no more — unless — there's no sayin' — a private yacht, maybe — wi' a small an' handy auxiliary."

"It's not enough for *that*," said Janet. "We're fair rich — well-to-do, but no more. A new gown for church, and one for the theatre. We'll have it made west."

"How much is it?" I asked.

"Twenty-five thousand pounds." I drew a long breath. "An' I've been earnin' twenty-five an' twenty pound a month!" The last words came away with a roar, as though the wide world was conspiring to beat him down.

"All this time I'm waiting," I said. "I know nothing since last September. Was it left you?"

They laughed aloud together. "It was left," said McPhee, choking. "Ou, ay, it was left. That's vara good. Of course it was left. Janet, d' ye note that? It was left. Now if you'd put *that* in your pamphlet it would have been vara

jocose. It *was* left." He slapped his thigh and roared till the wine quivered in the decanter.

The Scotch are a great people, but they are apt to hang over a joke too long, particularly when no one can see the point but themselves.

"When I rewrite my pamphlet I'll put it in, McPhee. Only I must know something more first."

McPhee thought for the length of half a cigar, while Janet caught my eye and led it round the room to one new thing after another — the new vine-pattern carpet, the new chiming rustic clock between the models of the Colombo outrigger-boats, the new inlaid sideboard with a purple cut-glass flower-stand, the fender of gilt and brass, and last, the new black-and-gold piano.

"In October o' last year the Board sacked me," began McPhee. "In October o' last year the *Breslau* came in for winter overhaul. She'd been runnin' eight months — two hunder an' forty days — an' I was three days makin' up my indents, when she went to dry-dock. All told, mark you, it was this side o' three hunder pound — to be preceese, two hunder an' eighty-six pound four shillings. There's not another man could ha' nursed the *Breslau* for eight months to that tune. Never again — never again! They may send their boats to the bottom, for aught I care."

"There's no need," said Janet, softly. "We're done wi' Holdock, Steiner & Chase."

"It's irritatin', Janet, it's just irritatin'. I ha' been justified from first to last, as the world knows, but — but I canna forgie 'em. Ay, wisdom is justified o' her children; an' any other man than me wad ha' made the indent eight hunder. Hay was our skipper — ye'll have met him. They shifted him to the *Torgau*, an' bade me wait for the *Breslau* under young Bannister. Ye'll obsairve there'd been a new election on the Board. I heard the shares were sellin' hither an' yon, an' the major part of the Board was new to me. The old Board would ne'er ha' done it. They trusted me. But the new Board were all for reorganisation. Young Steiner — Steiner's son — the Jew, was at the bottom of it, an' they did not think it worth their while to send me word. The first *I* knew — an' I was Chief Engineer — was the notice of the line's winter sailin's, an' the *Breslau* timed for sixteen days between port an' port! Sixteen days, man! She's a good boat, but eighteen is her summer time, mark you. Sixteen was sheer flytin', kitin' nonsense, an' so I told young Bannister.

"'We've got to make it,' he said. 'Ye should not ha' sent in a three hunder pound indent.'

"'Do they look for their boats to be run on air?' I said. 'The Board's daft.'

"'E'en tell 'em so,' he says. 'I'm a married man, an' my fourth's on the ways now, she says.'"

"A boy — wi' red hair," Janet put in. Her own

hair is the splendid red-gold that goes with a creamy complexion.

"My word, I was an angry man that day! Forbye I was fond o' the old *Breslau*, I looked for a little consideration from the Board after twenty years' service. There was Board-meetin' on Wednesday, an' I slept overnight in the engine-room, takin' figures to support my case. Well, I put it fair an' square before them all. 'Gentlemen,' I said, 'I've run the *Breslau* eight seasons, an' I believe there's no fault to find wi' my wark. But if ye haud to this'—I waggled the advertisement at 'em—'this that *I've* never heard of it till I read it at breakfast, I do assure you on my professional reputation, she can never do it. That is to say, she can for a while, but at a risk no thinkin' man would run.'

"'What the deil d' ye suppose we pass your indents for?' says old Holdock. 'Man, we're spendin' money like watter.'

"'I'll leave it in the Board's hands,' I said, 'if two hunder an' eighty-seven pound is anything beyond right an' reason for eight months.' I might ha' saved my breath, for the Board was new since the last election, an' there they sat, the damned deevidend-huntin' ship-chandlers, deaf as the adders o' Scripture.

"'We must keep faith wi' the public,' said young Steiner.

"'Keep faith wi' the *Breslau*, then,' I said. 'She's served you well, an' your father before you. She'll need her bottom restiffenin', an' new bed-plates, an' turnin' out the forward boilers, an' re-turnin' all three cylinders, an' refacin' all guides, to begin with. It's a three months' job.'

"'Because one employé is afraid?' says young Steiner. 'Maybe a piano in the Chief Engineer's cabin would be more to the point.'

"I crushed my cap in my hands, an' thanked God we'd no bairns an' a bit put by.

"'Understand, gentlemen,' I said. 'If the *Breslau* is made a sixteen-day boat, ye'll find another engineer.'

"'Bannister makes no objection,' said Holdock.

"'I'm speakin' for myself,' I said. 'Bannister has bairns.' An' then I lost my temper. 'Ye can run her into Hell an' out again if ye pay pilotage,' I said, 'but ye run without me.'

"'That's insolence,' said young Steiner.

"'At your pleasure,' I said, turnin' to go.

"'Ye can consider yourself dismissed. We must preserve discipline among our employés,' said old Holdock, an' he looked round to see that the Board was with him. They knew nothin'—God forgie 'em — an' they nodded me out o' the line after twenty years — after twenty years.

"I went out an' sat down by the hall porter to get my wits again. I'm thinkin' I swore at the

Board. Then auld McRimmon — o' McNaughten & McRimmon — came oot o' his office, that's on the same floor, an' looked at me, proppin' up one eyelid wi' his forefinger. Ye know they call him the Blind Deevil, forbye he's onythin' but blind, an' no deevil in his dealin's wi' me — McRimmon o' the Black Bird Line.

"'What's here, Mister McPhee?' said he.

"I was past prayin' for by then. 'A Chief Engineer sacked after twenty years' service because he'll not risk the *Breslau* on the new timin', an' be damned to ye, McRimmon,' I said.

"The auld man sucked in his lips an' whistled. 'Ah,' said he, 'the new timin'. I see!' He doddered into the Board-room I'd just left, an' the Dandie-dog that is just his blind man's leader stayed wi' me. *That* was providential. In a minute he was back again. 'Ye've cast your bread on the watter, McPhee, an' be damned to you,' he says. 'Whaur's my dog? My word, is he on your knee? There's more discernment in a dog than a Jew. What garred ye curse your Board, McPhee? It's expensive.'

"'They'll pay more for the *Breslau*,' I said. 'Get off my knee, ye smotherin' beast.'

"'Bearin's hot, eh?' said McRimmon. 'It's thirty year since a man daur curse me to my face. Time was I'd ha' cast ye doon the stairway for that.'

"'Forgie 's all!' I said. He was wearin' to

eighty, as I knew. 'I was wrong, McRimmon; but when a man's shown the door for doin' his plain duty, he's not always ceevil.'

"'So I hear,' says McRimmon. 'Ha' ye ony objection to a tramp freighter? It's only fifteen a month, but they say the Blind Deevil feeds a man better than others. She's my *Kite*. Come ben. Ye can thank Dandie, here. I'm no used to thanks. An' noo,' says he, 'what possessed ye to throw up your berth wi' Holdock?'

"'The new timin',' said I. 'The *Breslau* will not stand it.'

"'Hoot, oot,' said he. 'Ye might ha' crammed her a little — enough to show ye were drivin' her — an' brought her in twa days behind. What's easier than to say ye slowed for bearin's, eh? All my men do it, and — I believe 'em.'

"'McRimmon,' says I, 'what's her virginity to a lassie?'

"He puckered his dry face an' twisted in his chair. 'The warld an' a',' says he. 'My God, the vara warld an' a'! But what ha' you or me to do wi' virginity, this late along?'

"'This,' I said. 'There's just one thing that each one of us in his trade or profession will *not* do for ony consideration whatever. If I run to time I run to time, barrin' always the risks o' the high seas. Less than that, under God, I have not done. More than that, by God, I will not do!

There's no trick o' the trade I'm not acquaint wi'—'

"'So I've heard,' says McRimmon, dry as a biscuit.

"'But yon matter o' fair runnin' 's just my Shekinah, ye'll understand. I daurna tamper wi' *that*. Nursing weak engines is fair craftsmanship; but what the Board ask is cheatin', wi' the risk o' manslaughter addeetional.' Ye'll note I know my business.

"There was some more talk, an' next week I went aboard the *Kite*, twenty-five hunder ton, simple compound, a Black Bird tramp. The deeper she rode, the better she'd steam. I've snapped as much as eleven out of her, but eight point three was her fair normal. Good food forward an' better aft, all indents passed wi'out marginal remarks, the best coal, new donkeys, an' good crews. There was nothin' the old man would not do, except paint. That was his deeficulty. Ye could no more draw paint than his last teeth from him. He'd come down to dock, an' his boats a scandal all along the watter, an' he'd whine an' cry an' say they looked all he could desire. Every owner has his *non plus ultra*, I've obsairved. Paint was McRimmon's. But you could get round his engines without riskin' your life; an', for all his blindness, I've seen him reject five flawed intermediates, one after the other, on a nod from me;

an' his cattle-fittin's were guaranteed for North Atlantic winter weather. Ye ken what *that* means? McRimmon an' the Black Bird Line, God bless him!

"Oh, I forgot to say she would lie down an' fill her forward deck green, an' snore away into a twenty-knot gale forty-five to the minute, three an' a half knots an hour, the engines runnin' sweet an' true as a bairn breathin' in its sleep. Bell was skipper; an' forbye there's no love lost between crews an' owners, we were fond o' the auld Blind Deevil an' his dog, an' I'm thinkin' he liked us. He was worth the windy side o' twa million sterlin', an' no friend to his own blood-kin. Money's an awfu' thing — overmuch — for a lonely man.

"I'd taken her out twice, there an' back again, when word came o' the *Breslau's* breakdown, just as I prophesied. Calder was her engineer — he's not fit to run a tug down the Solent — an' he fairly lifted the engines off the bed-plates, an' they fell down in heaps, by what I heard. So she filled from the after stuffin'-box to the after bulkhead, an' lay star-gazing, with seventy-nine squealin' passengers in the saloon, till the *Camaralzaman* o' Ramsey & Gold's Cartagena line gave her a tow to the tune o' five thousand seven hunder an' forty pound, wi' costs in the Admiralty Court. She was helpless, ye'll understand, an' in no case to meet ony weather. Five thousand seven hunder an'

forty pounds, *with* costs, an' exclusive o' new engines! They'd ha' done better to ha' kept me — on the old timin'.

"But, even so, the new Board were all for retrenchment. Young Steiner, the Jew, was at the bottom of it. They sacked men right an' left, that would not eat the dirt the Board gave 'em. They cut down repairs; they fed crews wi' leavin's an' scrapin's; an', reversin' McRimmon's practice, they hid their defeeciencies wi' paint an' cheap gildin'. *Quem Deus vult perrdere prrius dementat*, ye remember.

"In January we went to dry-dock, an' in the next dock lay the *Grotkau*, their big freighter that was the *Dolabella* o' Piegan, Piegan & Walsh's line in '84 — a Clyde-built iron boat, a flat-bottomed, pigeon-breasted, under-engined, bull-nosed bitch of a five-thousand-ton freighter, that would neither steer, nor steam, nor stop when ye asked her. Whiles she'd attend to her helm, whiles she'd take charge, whiles she'd wait to scratch herself, an' whiles she'd buttock into a dock-head. But Holdock & Steiner had bought her cheap, an' painted her all over like the Hoor o' Babylon, an' we called her the *Hoor* for short." (By the way, McPhee kept to that name throughout the rest of his tale; so you must read accordingly.) "I went to see young Bannister — he had to take what the Board gave him, an' he an' Calder

were shifted together from the *Breslau* to this abortion — an' talkin' to him I went into the dock under her. Her plates were pitted till the men that were paint, paint, paintin' her laughed at it. But the warst was at the last. She'd a great clumsy iron twelve-foot Thresher propeller — Aitcheson designed the *Kite's* — an' just on the tail o' the shaft, behind the boss, was a red weepin' crack ye could ha' put a penknife to. Man, it was an awfu' crack!

"'When d' ye ship a new tail-shaft?' I said to Bannister.

"He knew what I meant. 'Oh, yon's a superfeecial flaw,' says he, not lookin' at me.

"'Superfeecial Gehenna!' I said. 'Ye'll not take her oot wi' a solution o' continuity that like.'

"'They'll putty it up this evening,' he said. 'I'm a married man, an'— ye used to know the Board.'

"I e'en said what was gied me in that hour. Ye know how a dry-dock echoes. I saw young Steiner standin' listenin' above me, an', man, he used language provocative of a breach o' the peace. I was a spy an' a disgraced employé, an' a corrupter o' young Bannister's morals, an' he'd prosecute me for libel. He went away when I ran up the steps — I'd ha' thrown him into the dock if I'd caught him — an' there I met McRimmon, wi' Dandie pullin' on the chain, guidin' the auld man among the railway lines.

"'McPhee,' said he, 'ye're no paid to fight Holdock, Steiner, Chase & Company, Limited, when ye meet. What's wrong between you?'

"'No more than a tail-shaft rotten as a kail-stump. For ony sakes go an' look, McRimmon. It's a comedietta.'

"'I'm feared o' yon conversational Hebrew,' said he. 'Whaur's the flaw, an' what like?'

"'A seven-inch crack just behind the boss. There's no power on earth will fend it just jarrin' off.'

"'When?'

"'That's beyon' my knowledge,' I said.

"'So it is; so it is,' said McRimmon. 'We've all oor leemitations. Ye're certain it was a crack?'

"'Man, it's a crevasse,' I said, for there were no words to describe the magnitude of it. 'An' young Bannister's sayin' it's no more than a superfeecial flaw!'

"'Weell, I tak' it oor business is to mind oor business. If ye've ony friends aboard her, McPhee, why not bid them to a bit dinner at Radley's?'

"'I was thinkin' o' tea in the cuddy,' I said. 'Engineers o' tramp freighters cannot afford hotel prices.'

"'Na! na!' says the auld man, whimperin'. 'Not the cuddy. They'll laugh at my *Kite*, for she's no plastered with paint like the *Hoor*. Bid them to

Radley's, McPhee, an' send me the bill. Thank Dandie, here, man. I'm no used to thanks.' Then he turned him round. (I was just thinkin' the vara same thing.) 'Mister McPhee,' said he, 'this is *not* senile dementia.'

"'Preserve 's!' I said, clean jumped oot o' mysel'. 'I was but thinkin' you're fey, McRimmon.'

"Dod, the auld deevil laughed till he nigh sat down on Dandie. 'Send me the bill,' says he. 'I'm long past champagne, but tell me how it tastes the morn.'

"Bell an' I bid young Bannister an' Calder to dinner at Radley's. They'll have no laughin' an' singin' there, but we took a private room — like yacht-owners fra' Cowes."

McPhee grinned all over, and lay back to think.

"And then?" said I.

"We were no drunk in ony preceese sense o' the word, but Radley's showed me the dead men. There were six magnums o' dry champagne an' maybe a bottle o' whisky."

"Do you mean to tell me that you four got away with a magnum and a half apiece, besides whisky?" I demanded.

McPhee looked down upon me from between his shoulders with toleration.

"Man, we were not settin' down to drink," he said. "They no more than made us wutty. To be sure, young Bannister laid his head on the

table an' greeted like a bairn, an' Calder was all for callin' on Steiner at two in the morn an' painting him galley-green; but they'd been drinkin' the afternoon. Lord, how they twa cursed the Board, an' the *Grotkau*, an' the tail-shaft, an' the engines, an' a'! They didna talk o' superfeecial flaws that night. I mind young Bannister an' Calder shakin' hands on a bond to be revenged on the Board at ony reasonable cost this side o' losing their certificates. Now mark ye how false economy ruins business. The Board fed them like swine (I have good reason to know it), an' I've obsairved wi' my ain people that if ye touch his stomach ye wauken the deil in a Scot. Men will tak' a dredger across the Atlantic if they're well fed, an' fetch her somewhere on the broadside o' the Americas; but bad food's bad service the warld over.

"The bill went to McRimmon, an' he said no more to me till the week-end, when I was at him for more paint, for we'd heard the *Kite* was chartered Liverpool-side.

"'Bide whaur ye're put,' said the Blind Deevil. 'Man, do ye wash in champagne? The *Kite's* no leavin' here till I gie the order, an'—how am I to waste paint on her, wi' the *Lammergeyer* docked for who knows how long an' a'?'

"She was our big freighter—McIntyre was engineer—an' I knew she'd come from overhaul

not three months. That morn I met McRimmon's head-clerk — ye'll not know him — fair bitin' his nails off wi' mortification.

"'The auld man's gone gyte,' says he. 'He's withdrawn the *Lammergeyer*.'

"'Maybe he has reasons,' says I.

"'Reasons! He's daft!'

"'He'll no be daft till he begins to paint,' I said.

"'That's just what he's done — an' South American freights higher than we'll live to see them again. He's laid her up to paint her — to paint her — to paint her!' says the little clerk, dancin' like a hen on a hot plate. 'Five thousand ton o' potential freight rottin' in dry-dock, man; an' he dolin' the paint out in quarter-pound-tins, for it cuts him to the heart, mad though he is. An' the *Grotkau* — the *Grotkau* of all conceivable bottoms — soaking up every pound that should be ours at Liverpool!'

"I was staggered wi' this folly — considerin' the dinner at Radley's in connection wi' the same.

"'Ye may well stare, McPhee,' says the head-clerk. 'There's engines, an' rollin' stock, an' iron bridges — d' ye know what freights are noo? — an' pianos, an' millinery, an' fancy Brazil cargo o' every species pourin' into the *Grotkau* — the *Grotkau* o' the Jerusalem firm — an' the *Lammergeyer's* bein' painted!'

"Losh, I thought he'd drop dead wi' the fits.

"I could say no more than 'Obey orders, if ye break owners,' but on the *Kite* we believed McRimmon was mad; an' McIntyre of the *Lammergeyer* was for lockin' him up by some patent legal process he'd found in a book o' maritime law. An' a' that week South American freights rose an' rose. It was sinfu'!

"Syne Bell got orders to tak' the *Kite* round to Liverpool in water-ballast, an' McRimmon came to bid 's good-bye, yammerin' an' whinin' o'er the acres o' paint he'd lavished on the *Lammergeyer*.

"'I look to you to retrieve it,' says he. 'I look to you to reimburse me! 'Fore God, why are ye not cast off? Are ye dawdlin' in dock for a purpose?'

"'What odds, McRimmon?' says Bell. 'We'll be a day behind the fair at Liverpool. The *Grotkau's* got all the freight that might ha' been ours an' the *Lammergeyer's*.' McRimmon laughed an' chuckled — the pairfect eemage o' senile dementia. Ye ken his eyebrows wark up an' down like a gorilla's.

"'Ye're under sealed orders,' said he, tee-heein' an' scratchin' himself. 'Yon's they' — to be opened *seriatim*.

"Says Bell, shufflin' the envelopes when the auld man had gone ashore: 'We're to creep round a' the south coast, standin' in for orders — this

weather, too. There's no question o' his lunacy now.'

"Well, we buttocked the auld *Kite* along — vara bad weather we made — standin' in all alongside for telegraphic orders, which are the curse o' skippers. Syne we made over to Holyhead, an' Bell opened the last envelope for the last instructions. I was wi' him in the cuddy, an' he threw it over to me, cryin': 'Did ye ever know the like, Mac?'

"I'll no say what McRimmon had written, but he was far from mad. There was a sou'wester brewin' when we made the mouth o' the Mersey, a bitter cold morn wi' a grey-green sea an' a grey-green sky — Liverpool weather, as they say; an' there we lay choppin', an' the crew swore. Ye canna keep secrets aboard ship. They thought McRimmon was mad, too.

"Syne we saw the *Grotkau* rollin' oot on the top o' flood, deep an' double deep, wi' her new-painted funnel an' her new-painted boats an' a'. She looked her name, an', moreover, she coughed like it. Calder tauld me at Radley's what ailed his engines, but my own ear would ha' told me twa mile awa', by the beat o' them. Round we came, plungin' an' squatterin' in her wake, an' the wind cut wi' good promise o' more to come. By six it blew hard but clear, an' before the middle watch it was a sou'wester in airnest.

"'She'll edge into Ireland, this gait,' says Bell.

I was with him on the bridge, watchin' the *Grotkau's* port light. Ye canna see green so far as red, or we'd ha' kept to leeward. We'd no passengers to consider, an' (all eyes being on the *Grotkau*) we fair walked into a liner rampin' home to Liverpool. Or, to be preceese, Bell no more than twisted the *Kite* oot from under her bows, an' there was a little damnin' betwix' the twa bridges. Noo a passenger"— McPhee regarded me benignantly —"wad ha' told the papers that as soon as he got to the Customs. We stuck to the *Grotkau's* tail that night an' the next twa days — she slowed down to five knot by my reckonin' — an' we lapped along the weary way to the Fastnet."

"But you don't go by the Fastnet to get to any South American port, do you?" I said.

"*We* do not. We prefer to go as direct as may be. But we were followin' the *Grotkau*, an' she'd no walk into that gale for ony consideration. Knowin' what I did to her discredit, I couldna blame young Bannister. It was warkin' up to a North Atlantic winter gale, snow an' sleet an' a perishin' wind. Eh, it was like the Deil walkin' abroad o' the surface o' the deep, whuppin' off the top o' the waves before he made up his mind. They'd bore up against it so far, but the minute she was clear o' the Skelligs she fair tucked up her skirts an' ran for it by Dunmore Head. Wow, she rolled!

"'She'll be makin' Smerwick,' says Bell.

"'She'd ha' tried for Ventry by noo if she meant that,' I said.

"'They'll roll the funnel oot o' her, this gait,' says Bell. 'Why canna Bannister keep her head to sea?'

"'It's the tail-shaft. Ony rollin''s better than pitchin' wi' superfeecial cracks in the tail-shaft. Calder knows that much,' I said.

"'It's ill wark retreevin' steamers this weather,' said Bell. His beard and whiskers were frozen to his oilskin, an' the spray was white on the weather side of him. Pairfect North Atlantic winter weather!

"One by one the sea raxed away our three boats, an' the davits were crumpled like ram's horns.

"'Yon's bad,' said Bell, at the last. 'Ye canna pass a hawser wi'oot a boat.' Bell was a vara judeecious man—for an Aberdonian.

"I'm not one that fashes himself for eventualities outside the engine-room, so I e'en slipped down betwixt waves to see how the *Kite* fared. Man, she's the best-geared boat of her class that ever left Clyde! Kinloch, my second, knew her as well as I did. I found him dryin' his socks on the main-steam, an' combin' his whiskers wi' the comb Janet gied me last year, for the warld an' a' as though we were in port. I tried the feed, speered into the stoke-hole, thumbed all bearin's,

spat on the thrust for luck, gied 'em my blessin', an' took Kinloch's socks before I went up to the bridge again.

"Then Bell handed me the wheel, an' went below to warm himself. When he came up my gloves were frozen to the spokes an' the ice clicked over my eyelids. Pairfect North Atlantic winter weather, as I was sayin'.

"The gale blew out by night, but we lay in smotherin' cross-seas that made the auld *Kete* chatter from stem to stern. I slowed to thirty-four, I mind — no, thirty-seven. There was a long swell the morn, an' the *Grotkau* was headin' into it west awa'.

"'She'll win to Rio yet, tail-shaft or no tail-shaft,' says Bell.

"'Last night shook her,' I said. 'She'll jar it off yet, mark my word.'

"We were then, maybe, a hunder an' fifty mile west-sou'west o' Slyne Head, by dead reckonin'. Next day we made a hunder an' thirty — ye'll note we were not racin'-boats — an' the day after a hunder an' sixty-one, an' that made us, we'll say, Eighteen an' a bittock west, an' maybe Fifty-one an' a bittock north, crossin' all the North Atlantic liner lanes on the long slant, always in sight o' the *Grotkau*, creepin' up by night an' fallin' awa' by day. After the gale it was cold weather wi' dark nights.

"I was in the engine-room on Friday night, just before the middle watch, when Bell whustled down the tube: 'She's done it'; an' up I came.

"The *Grotkau* was just a fair distance south, an' one by one she ran up the three red lights in a vertical line — the sign of a steamer not under control.

"'Yon's a tow for us,' said Bell, lickin' his chops. 'She'll be worth more than the *Breslau*. We'll go down to her, McPhee!'

"'Bide a while,' I said. 'The seas fair throng wi' ships here.'

"'Reason why,' said Bell. 'It's a fortune gaun beggin'. What d' ye think, man?'

"'Gie her till daylight. She knows we're here. If Bannister needs help he'll loose a rocket.'

"'Wha told ye Bannister's need? We'll ha' some rag-an'-bone tramp snappin' her up under oor nose,' said he; an' he put the wheel over. We were goin' slow.

"'Bannister wad like better to go home on a liner an' eat in the saloon. Mind ye what they said o' Holdock & Steiner's food that night at Radley's? Keep her awa', man — keep her awa'. A tow's a tow, but a derelict's big salvage.'

"'E-eh!' said Bell. 'Yon's an inshot o' yours, Mac. I love ye like a brother. We'll bide whaur we are till daylight'; an' he kept her awa'.

"Syne up went a rocket forward, an' twa on the bridge, an' a blue light aft. Syne a tar-barrel forward again.

"'She's sinkin',' said Bell. 'It's all gaun, an' I'll get no more than a pair o' night-glasses for pickin' up young Bannister — the fool!'

"'Fair an' soft again,' I said. 'She's signallin' to the south of us. Bannister knows as well as I that one rocket would bring the *Breslau*. He'll no be wastin' fireworks for nothin'. Hear her ca'!'

"The *Grotkau* whustled an' whustled for five minutes, an' then there were more fireworks — a regular exhibeetion.

"'That's no for men in the regular trade,' says Bell. 'Ye're right, Mac. That's for a cuddy full o' passengers.' He blinked through the night-glasses when it lay a bit thick to southward.

"'What d' ye make of it?' I said.

"'Liner,' he says. 'Yon's her rocket. Ou, ay; they've waukened the gold-strapped skipper, an'— noo they've waukened the passengers. They're turnin' on the electrics, cabin by cabin. Yon's anither rocket! They're comin' up to help the perishin' in deep watters.'

"'Gie me the glass,' I said. But Bell danced on the bridge, clean dementit. 'Mails — mails — mails!' said he. 'Under contract wi' the Government for the due conveyance o' the mails; an' as such, Mac, ye'll note, she may rescue life at

sea, but she canna tow! — she canna tow! Yon's her night-signal. She'll be up in half an hour!'

"'Gowk!' I said, 'an' we blazin' here wi' all oor lights. Oh, Bell, ye're a fool!'

"He tumbled off the bridge forward, an' I tumbled aft, an' before ye could wink our lights were oot, the engine-room hatch was covered, an' we lay pitch-dark, watchin' the lights o' the liner come up that the *Grotkau'd* been signallin' to. Twenty knot an hour she came, every cabin lighted, an' her boats swung awa'. It was grandly done, an' in the inside of an hour. She stopped like Mrs. Holdock's machine; down went the gangway, down went the boats, an' in ten minutes we heard the passengers cheerin', an' awa' she fled.

"'They'll tell o' this all the days they live,' said Bell. 'A rescue at sea by night, as pretty as a play. Young Bannister an' Calder will be drinkin' in the saloon, an' six months hence the Board o' Trade 'll gie the skipper a pair o' binoculars. It's vara philanthropic all round.'

"We lay by till day — ye may think we waited for it wi' sore eyes — an' there sat the *Grotkau*, her nose a bit cocked, just leerin' at us. She looked pairfectly ridiculous.

"'She'll be fillin' aft,' says Bell; 'for why is she down by the stern? The tail-shaft's punched a hole in her, an'— we've no boats. There's three hunder thousand pound sterlin', at a conservative

estimate, droonin' before our eyes. What's to do?' An' his bearin's got hot again in a minute: he was an incontinent man.

"'Run her as near as ye daur,' I said. 'Gie me a jacket an' a life-line, an' I'll swum for it.' There was a big lump of a sea, an' it was cold in the wind — vara cold; but they'd gone overside like passengers, young Bannister an' Calder an' a', leaving the gangway down on the lee-side. It would ha' been a flyin' in the face o' manifest Providence to overlook the invitation. We were within fifty yards o' her while Kinloch was garmin' me all over wi' oil behind the galley; an' as we ran past I went outboard for the salvage o' three hunder thousand pound. Man, it was perishin' cold, but I'd done my job judgmatically, an' came scrapin all along her side slap on to the lower gratin' o' the gangway. No one more astonished than me, I assure ye. Before I'd caught my breath I'd skinned both my knees on the gratin', an' was climbin' up before she rolled again. I made my line fast to the rail, an' squattered aft to young Bannister's cabin, whaur I dried me wi' everything in his bunk, an' put on every conceivable sort o' rig I found till the blood was circulatin'. Three pair drawers, I mind I found — to begin upon — an' I needed them all. It was the coldest cold I remember in all my experience.

"Syne I went aft to the engine-room. The

Grotkau sat on her own tail, as they say. She was vara short-shafted, an' her gear was all aft. There was four or five foot o' watter in the engine-room slummockin' to an' fro, black an' greasy; maybe there was six foot. The stoke-hold doors were screwed home, an' the stoke-hold was tight enough, but for a minute the mess in the engine-room deceived me. Only for a minute, though, an' that was because I was not, in a manner o' speakin', as calm as ordinar'. I looked again to mak' sure. 'Twas just black wi' bilge: dead-watter that must ha' come in fortuitously, ye ken."

"McPhee, I'm only a passenger," I said, "but you don't persuade me that six foot o' water can come into an engine-room fortuitously."

"Who's tryin' to persuade one way or the other?" McPhee retorted. "I'm statin' the facts o' the case — the simple, natural facts. Six or seven foot o' dead-watter in the engine-room is a vara depressin' sight if ye think there's like to be more comin'; but I did not consider that such was likely, an' so, ye'll note, I was not depressed."

"That's all very well, but I want to know about the water," I said.

"I've told ye. There was six feet or more there, wi' Calder's cap floatin' on top."

"Where did it come from?"

"Weel, in the confusion o' things after the propeller had dropped off an' the engines were racin'

an' a', it's vara possible that Calder might ha' lost it off his head an' no troubled himself to pick it up again. I remember seein' that cap on him at Southampton."

"I don't want to know about the cap. I'm asking where the water came from and what it was doing there, and why you were so certain that it wasn't a leak, McPhee?"

"For good reason — for good an' sufficient reason."

"Give it to me, then."

"Weel, it's a reason that does not properly concern myself only. To be preceese, I'm of opinion that it was due, the watter, in part to an error o' judgment in another man. We can a' mak' mistakes."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!"

"I got me to the rail again, an', 'What's wrang?' said Bell, hailin'.

"'She'll do,' I said. 'Send 's o'er a hawser, an' a man to steer. I'll pull him in by the life-line.'

"I could see heads bobbin' back an' forth, an' a whuff or two o' strong words. Then Bell said: 'They'll not trust themselves — one of 'em — in this watter — except Kinloch, an' I'll no spare him.'

"'The more salvage to me, then,' I said. 'I'll make shift *solo*.'

"Says one dock-rat, at this: 'D' ye think she's safe?'

"'I'll guarantee ye nothing,' I said, 'except maybe a hammerin' for keepin' me this long.'

"Then he sings out: 'There's no more than one life-belt, an' they canna find it, or I'd come.'

"'Throw him over, the Jezebel,' I said, for I was oot o' patience; an' they took haud o' that volunteer before he knew what was in store, an' hove him over, in the bight of my life-line. So I e'en hauled him upon the sag of it, hand over fist — a vara welcome recruit when I'd tilted the salt watter oot of him: for, by the way, he couldna swim.

"Syne they bent a twa-inch rope to the life-line, an' a hawser to that, an' I led the rope o'er the drum of a hand-winch forward, an' we sweated the hawser inboard an' made it fast to the *Grotkau's* bitts.

"Bell brought the *Kite* so close I feared she'd roll in an' do the *Grotkau's* plates a mischief. He hove anither life-line to me, an' went astern, an' we had all the weary winch work to do again wi' a second hawser. For all that, Bell was right: we'd a long tow before us, an' though Providence had helped us that far, there was no sense in leavin' too much to its keepin'. When the second hawser was fast, I was wet wi' sweat, an' I cried Bell to tak' up his slack an' go home. The other man was by way o' helpin' the work wi' askin' for drinks, but I e'en told him he must hand reef an'

steer, beginnin' with steerin', for I was goin' to turn in. He steered — oh, ay, he steered, in a manner o' speakin'. At the least, he grippit the spokes an' twiddled 'em an' looked wise, but I doubt if the *Hoor* ever felt it. I turned in there an' then, to young Bannister's bunk, an' slept past expression. I waukened ragin' wi' hunger, a fair lump o' sea runnin', the *Kite* snorin' awa' four knots an hour; an' the *Grotkau* slappin' her nose under, an' yawnin' an' standin' over at discretion. She was a most disgracefu' tow. But the shameful thing of all was the food. I raxed me a meal fra' galley-shelves an' pantries an' lazareetes an' cubby-holes that I would not ha' gied to the mate of a Cardiff collier; an' ye ken we say a Cardiff mate will eat clinkers to save waste. I'm sayin' it was simply vile! The crew had written what *they* thought of it on the new paint o' the fo'c'sle, but I had not a decent soul wi' me to complain on. There was nothin' for me to do save watch the hawsers an' the *Kite's* tail squatterin' down in white watter when she lifted to a sea; so I got steam on the after donkey-pump, an' pumped oot the engine-room. There's no sense in leavin' watter loose in a ship. When she was dry, I went doun the shaft-tunnel, an' found she was leakin' a little through the stuffin'-box, but nothin' to make wark. The propeller had e'en jarred off, as I knew it must, an' Calder had been waitin' for

it to go wi' his hand on the gear. He told me as much when I met him ashore. There was nothin' started or strained. It had just slipped awa' to the bed o' the Atlantic as easy as a man dyin' wi' due warnin' — a most providential business for all concerned. Syne I took stock o' the *Grotkau's* upper works. Her boats had been smashed on the davits, an' here an' there was the rail missin', an' a ventilator or two had fetched awa', an' the bridge-rails were bent by the seas; but her hatches were tight, an' she'd taken no sort o' harm. Dod, I came to hate her like a human bein', for I was eight weary days aboard, starvin' — ay, starvin' — within a cable's length o' plenty. All day I laid in the bunk reading the 'Woman-Hater,' the grandest book Charlie Reade ever wrote, an' pickin' a toothful here an' there. It was weary, weary work. Eight days, man, I was aboard the *Grotkau*, an' not one full meal did I make. Sma' blame her crew would not stay by her. The other man? Oh, I warked him wi' a vengeance to keep him warm.

"It came on to blow when we fetched soundin's, an' that kept me standin' by the hawsers, lashed to the capstan, breathin' 'twixt green seas. I near died o' cauld an' hunger, for the *Grotkau* towed like a barge, an' Bell howkit her along through or over. It was vara thick up-Channel, too. We were standin' in to make some sort o' light, an' we

near walked over twa three fishin'-boats, an' they cried us we were overclose to Falmouth. Then we were near cut down by a drunken foreign fruiter that was blunderin' between us an' the shore, an' it got thicker an' thicker that night, an' I could feel by the tow Bell did not know whaur he was. Losh, we knew in the morn, for the wind blew the fog oot like a candle, an' the sun came clear; an' as surely as McRimmon gied me my cheque, the shadow o' the Eddystone lay across our tow-rope! We were that near — ay, we were that near! Bell fetched the *Kite* round with the jerk that came close to tearin' the bitts out o' the *Grotkau*, an' I mind I thanked my Maker in young Bannister's cabin when we were inside Plymouth breakwater.

"The first to come aboard was McRimmon, wi' Dandie. Did I tell you our orders were to take anything we found into Plymouth? The auld deil had just come down overnight, puttin' two an' two together from what Calder had told him when the liner landed the *Grotkau's* men. He had preceesely hit oor time. I 'd hailed Bell for something to eat, an' he sent it o'er in the same boat wi' McRimmon, when the auld man came to me. He grinned an' slapped his legs an' worked his eyebrows the while I ate.

"'How do Holdock, Steiner & Chase feed their men?' said he.

"'Ye can see,' I said, knockin' the top off another beer-bottle. 'I did not sign to be starved, McRimmon.'

"'Nor to swum, either,' said he, for Bell had tauld him how I carried the line aboard. 'Well, I'm thinkin' you'll be no loser. What freight could we ha' put into the *Lammergeyer* would equal salvage on four hunder thousand pounds — hull an' cargo? Eh, McPhee? This cuts the liver out o' Holdock, Steiner, Chase & Company, Limited. Eh, McPhee? An' I'm sufferin' from senile dementia now? Eh, McPhee? An' I'm not daft, am I, till I begin to paint the *Lammergeyer?* Eh, McPhee? Ye may weel lift your leg, Dandie! I ha' the laugh o' them all. Ye found watter in the engine-room?'

"'To speak wi'oot prejudice,' I said, 'there was some watter.'

"'They thought she was sinkin' after the propeller went. She filled wi' extraordinary rapeedity. Calder said it grieved him an' Bannister to abandon her.'

"I thought o' the dinner at Radley's, an' what like o' food I'd eaten for eight days.

"'It would grieve them sore,' I said.

"'But the crew would not hear o' stayin' an' workin' her back under canvas. They're gaun up an' down sayin' they'd ha' starved first.'

"'They'd ha' starved if they'd stayed,' said I.

"'I tak' it, fra' Calder's account, there was a mutiny, a'most.'

"'Ye know more than I, McRimmon,' I said. 'Speakin' wi'oot prejudice, for we're all in the same boat, *who* opened the bilge-cock?'

"'Oh, that's it — is it?' said the auld man, an' I could see he was surprised. 'A bilge-cock, ye say?'

"'I believe it was a bilge-cock. They were all shut when I came aboard, but some one had flooded the engine-room eight feet over all, an' shut it off with the worm-an'-wheel gear from the second gratin' afterwards.'

"'Losh!' said McRimmon. 'The ineequity o' man's beyond belief. But it's awfu' discreditable to Holdock, Steiner & Chase, if that came oot in court.'

"'It's just my own curiosity,' I said.

"'Aweel, Dandie's afflicted wi' the same disease. Dandie, strive against curiosity, for it brings a little dog into traps an' such like. Whaur was the *Kite* when yon painted liner took off the *Grotkau's* people?'

"'Just there or thereabouts,' I said.

"'An' which o' you twa thought to cover your lights?' said he, winkin'.

"'Dandie,' I said to the dog, 'we must both strive against curiosity. It's an unremunerative business. What's our chance o' salvage, Dandie?'

"He laughed till he choked. 'Tak' what I gie you, McPhee, an' be content,' he said. 'Lord, how a man wastes time when he gets old! Get aboard the *Kite*, mon, as soon as ye can. I've clean forgot there's a Baltic charter yammerin' for you at London. That'll be your last voyage, I'm thinkin', excep' by way o' pleasure.'

"Steiner's men were comin' aboard to take charge an' tow her round, an' I passed young Steiner in a boat as I went to the *Kite*. He looked down his nose; but McRimmon pipes up: 'Here's the man ye owe the *Grotkau* to — at a price, Steiner — at a price! Let me introduce Mr. McPhee to you. Maybe ye've met before; but ye've vara little luck in keepin' your men — ashore or afloat!'

"Young Steiner looked angry enough to eat him as he chuckled an' whustled in his dry old throat.

"'Ye've not got your award yet,' Steiner says.

"'Na, na,' says the auld man, in a screech ye could hear to the Hoe, 'but I've twa million sterlin', an' no bairns, ye Judeeas Apella, if ye mean to fight; an' I'll match ye p'und for p'und till the last p'und's oot. Ye ken *me*, Steiner! I'm McRimmon o' McNaughten & McRimmon!'

"'Dod,' he said betwix' his teeth, sittin' back in the boat, 'I've waited fourteen year to break that Jew-firm, an' God be thankit I'll do it now.'

"The *Kite* was in the Baltic while the auld man was warkin' his warks, but I know the assessors valued the *Grotkau*, all told, at over three hunder an' sixty thousand — her manifest was a treat o' richness — an' McRimmon got a third for salvin' an abandoned ship. Ye see, there's vast deeference between towin' a ship wi' men on her an' pickin' up a derelict — a vast deeference — in pounds sterlin'. Moreover, twa three o' the *Grotkau's* crew were burnin' to testify about food, an' there was a note o' Calder to the Board, in regard to the tail-shaft, that would ha' been vara damagin' if it had come into court. They knew better than to fight.

"Syne the *Kite* came back, an' McRimmon paid off me an' Bell personally, an' the rest of the crew *pro rata*, I believe it's ca'ed. My share — oor share, I should say — was just twenty-five thousand pound sterlin'."

At this point Janet jumped up and kissed him.

"Five-an'-twenty thousand pound sterlin'. Noo, I'm fra' the North, an' I'm not the like to fling money awa' rashly, but I'd gie six months' pay — one hunder an' twenty pounds — to know *who* flooded the engine-room of the *Grotkau*. I'm fairly well acquaint wi' McRimmon's eediosyncrasies, an' *he'd* no hand in it. It was not Calder, for I've asked him, an' he wanted to fight me. It would be in the highest degree unprofessional o' Calder — not fightin', but openin' bilge-cocks — but for a

while I thought it was him. Ay, I judged it might be him — under temptation."

"What's your theory?" I demanded.

"Weel, I'm inclined to think it was one o' those singular providences that remind us we're in the hands o' Higher Powers."

"It couldn't open and shut itself?"

"I did not mean that; but some half-starvin' oiler or, maybe, trimmer must ha' opened it a while to mak' sure o' leavin' the *Grotkau*. It's a demoralisin' thing to see an engine-room flood up after any accident to the gear — demoralisin' an' deceptive both. Aweel, the man got what he wanted, for they went aboard the liner cryin' that the *Grotkau* was sinkin'. But it's curious to think o' the consequences. In a' human probability, he's bein' damned in heaps at the present moment aboard another tramp freighter; an' here am I, wi' five-an'-twenty thousand pound invested, resolute to go to sea no more — providential's the preceese word — except as a passenger, ye'll understand, Janet."

* * * * * * * * * *

McPhee kept his word. He and Janet went for a voyage as passengers in the first-class saloon. They paid seventy pounds for their berths; and Janet found a very sick woman in the second-class saloon, so that for sixteen days she lived below, and chatted with the stewardesses at the foot of the second-saloon stairs while her patient

slept. McPhee was a passenger for exactly twenty-four hours. Then the engineers' mess — where the oilcloth tables are — joyfully took him to its bosom, and for the rest of the voyage that company was richer by the unpaid services of a highly certificated engineer.

THE BRUSHWOOD BOY

THE BRUSHWOOD BOY

Girls and boys, come out to play:
The moon is shining as bright as day!
Leave your supper and leave your sleep,
And come with your playfellows out in the street!
Up the ladder and down the wall—

A CHILD of three sat up in his crib and screamed at the top of his voice. his fists clinched and his eyes full of terror. At first no one heard, for his nursery was in the west wing, and the nurse was talking to a gardener among the laurels. Then the housekeeper passed that way, and hurried to soothe him. He was her special pet, and she disapproved of the nurse.

"What was it, then? What was it, then? There's nothing to frighten him, Georgie dear."

"It was — it was a policeman! He was on the Down — I saw him! He came in. Jane *said* he would."

"Policemen don't come into houses, dearie. Turn over, and take my hand."

"I saw him — on the Down. He came here Where is your hand, Harper?"

The housekeeper waited till the sobs changed to the regular breathing of sleep before she stole out.

"Jane, what nonsense have you been telling Master Georgie about policemen?"

"I haven't told him anything."

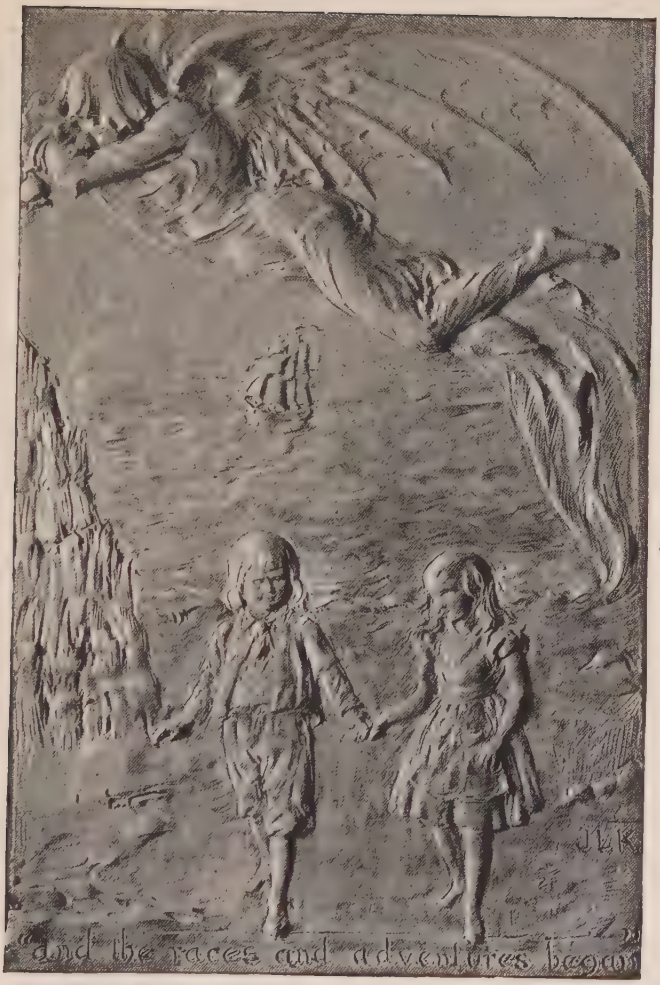
"You have. He's been dreaming about them."

"We met Tisdall on Dowhead when we were in the donkey-cart this morning. P'r'aps that's what put it into his head."

"Oh! Now you aren't going to frighten the child into fits with your silly tales, and the master know nothing about it. If ever I catch you again," etc.

* * * * * * * * * *

A child of six was telling himself stories as he lay in bed. It was a new power, and he kept it a secret. A month before it had occurred to him to carry on a nursery tale left unfinished by his mother, and he was delighted to find the tale as it came out of his own head just as surprising as though he were listening to it "all new from the beginning." There was a prince in that tale, and he killed dragons, but only for one night. Ever afterwards Georgie dubbed himself prince, pasha, giant-killer, and all the rest (you see, he could not tell any one, for fear of being laughed at), and his tales faded gradually into dreamland, where adventures were so many that he could not recall



The Brushwood Boy

the half of them. They all began in the same way, or, as Georgie explained to the shadows of the night-light, there was "the same starting-off place" — a pile of brushwood stacked somewhere near a beach; and round this pile Georgie found himself running races with little boys and girls. These ended, ships ran high up the dry land and opened into cardboard boxes; or gilt-and-green iron railings that surrounded beautiful gardens turned all soft and could be walked through and overthrown so long as he remembered it was only a dream. He could never hold that knowledge more than a few seconds ere things became real, and instead of pushing down houses full of grown-up people (a just revenge), he sat miserably upon gigantic door-steps trying to sing the multiplication-table up to four times six.

The princess of his tales was a person of wonderful beauty (she came from the old illustrated edition of Grimm, now out of print), and as she always applauded Georgie's valour among the dragons and buffaloes, he gave her the two finest names he had ever heard in his life — Annie and Louise, pronounced "Annie*an*louise." When the dreams swamped the stories, she would change into one of the little girls round the brushwood-pile, still keeping her title and crown. She saw Georgie drown once in a dream-sea by the beach (it was the day after he had been taken to bathe

in a real sea by his nurse); and he said as he sank: "Poor Annie*an*louise! She'll be sorry for me now!" But "Annie*an*louise," walking slowly on the beach, called, "'Ha! ha!' said the duck, laughing," which to a waking mind might not seem to bear on the situation. It consoled Georgie at once, and must have been some kind of spell, for it raised the bottom of the deep, and he waded out with a twelve-inch flower-pot on each foot. As he was strictly forbidden to meddle with flower-pots in real life, he felt triumphantly wicked.

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The movements of the grown-ups, whom Georgie tolerated, but did not pretend to understand, removed his world, when he was seven years old, to a place called "Oxford-on-a-visit." Here were huge buildings surrounded by vast prairies, with streets of infinite length, and, above all, something called the "buttery," which Georgie was dying to see, because he knew it must be greasy, and therefore delightful. He perceived how correct were his judgments when his nurse led him through a stone arch into the presence of an enormously fat man, who asked him if he would like some bread and cheese. Georgie was used to eat all round the clock, so he took what "buttery" gave him, and would have taken some brown liquid called "audit-ale" but that his nurse led him away to an afternoon performance of a thing

called "Pepper's Ghost." This was intensely thrilling. People's heads came off and flew all over the stage, and skeletons danced bone by bone, while Mr. Pepper himself, beyond question a man of the worst, waved his arms and flapped a long gown, and in a deep bass voice (Georgie had never heard a man sing before) told of his sorrows unspeakable. Some grown-up or other tried to explain that the illusion was made with mirrors, and that there was no need to be frightened. Georgie did not know what illusions were, but he did know that a mirror was the looking-glass with the ivory handle on his mother's dressing-table. Therefore the "grown-up" was "just saying things" after the distressing custom of "grown-ups," and Georgie cast about for amusement between scenes. Next to him sat a little girl dressed all in black, her hair combed off her forehead exactly like the girl in the book called "Alice in Wonderland," which had been given him on his last birthday. The little girl looked at Georgie, and Georgie looked at her. There seemed to be no need of any further introduction.

"I've got a cut on my thumb," said he. It was the first work of his first real knife, a savage triangular hack, and he esteemed it a most valuable possession.

"I'm tho thorry!" she lisped. "Let me look —pleathe."

"There's a di-ack-lum plaster on, but it's all raw under," Georgie answered, complying.

"Dothent it hurt?" — her grey eyes were full of pity and interest.

"Awf'ly. Perhaps it will give me lockjaw."

"It lookth very horrid. I'm *tho* thorry!" She put a forefinger to his hand, and held her head sidewise for a better view.

Here the nurse turned, and shook him severely. "You mustn't talk to strange little girls, Master Georgie."

"She isn't strange. She's very nice. I like her, an' I've showed her my new cut."

"The idea! You change places with me."

She moved him over, and shut out the little girl from his view, while the grown-up behind renewed the futile explanations.

"I am *not* afraid, truly," said the boy, wriggling in despair; "but why don't you go to sleep in the afternoons, same as Provost of Oriel?"

Georgie had been introduced to a grown-up of that name, who slept in his presence without apology. Georgie understood that he was the most important grown-up in Oxford; hence he strove to gild his rebuke with flatteries. This grown-up did not seem to like it, but he collapsed, and Georgie lay back in his seat, silent and enraptured. Mr. Pepper was singing again, and the deep, ringing voice, the red fire, and the misty, wav-

ing gown all seemed to be mixed up with the little girl who had been so kind about his cut. When the performance was ended she nodded to Georgie, and Georgie nodded in return. He spoke no more than was necessary till bedtime, but meditated on new colours and sounds and lights and music and things as far as he understood them; the deep-mouthed agony of Mr. Pepper mingling with the little girl's lisp. That night he made a new tale, from which he shamelessly removed the Rapunzel-Rapunzel-let-down-your-hair princess, gold crown, Grimm edition, and all, and put a new Annie*an*louise in her place. So it was perfectly right and natural that when he came to the brushwood-pile he should find her waiting for him, her hair combed off her forehead more like Alice in Wonderland than ever, and the races and adventures began.

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Ten years at an English public school do not encourage dreaming. Georgie won his growth and chest measurement, and a few other things which did not appear in the bills, under a system of cricket, football, and paper-chases, from four to five days a week, which provided for three lawful cuts of a ground-ash if any boy absented himself from these entertainments. He became a rumple-collared, dusty-hatted fag of the Lower Third, and a light half-back at Little Side football; was

pushed and prodded through the slack back-waters of the Lower Fourth, where the raffle of a school generally accumulates; won his "second-fifteen" cap at football, enjoyed the dignity of a study with two companions in it, and began to look forward to office as a sub-prefect. At last he blossomed into full glory as head of the school, ex-officio captain of the games; head of his house, where he and his lieutenants preserved discipline and decency among seventy boys from twelve to seventeen; general arbiter in the quarrels that spring up among the touchy Sixth — and intimate friend and ally of the Head himself. When he stepped forth in the black jersey, white knickers, and black stockings of the First Fifteen, the new match-ball under his arm, and his old and frayed cap at the back of his head, the small fry of the lower forms stood apart and worshipped, and the "new caps" of the team talked to him ostentatiously, that the world might see. And so, in summer, when he came back to the pavilion after a slow but eminently safe game, it mattered not whether he had made nothing or, as once happened, a hundred and three, the school shouted just the same, and women-folk who had come to look at the match looked at Cottar — Cottar, *major;* "that's Cottar!" Above all, he was responsible for that thing called the tone of the school, and few realise with what passionate devo-

tion a certain type of boy throws himself into this work. Home was a far-away country, full of ponies and fishing and shooting, and men-visitors who interfered with one's plans; but school was the real world, where things of vital importance happened, and crises arose that must be dealt with promptly and quietly. Not for nothing was it written, "Let the Consuls look to it that the Republic takes no harm," and Georgie was glad to be back in authority when the holidays ended. Behind him, but not too near, was the wise and temperate Head, now suggesting the wisdom of the serpent, now counselling the mildness of the dove; leading him on to see, more by half-hints than by any direct word, how boys and men are all of a piece, and how he who can handle the one will assuredly in time control the other.

For the rest, the school was not encouraged to dwell on its emotions, but rather to keep in hard condition, to avoid false quantities, and to enter the army direct, without the help of the expensive London crammer, under whose roof young blood learns too much. Cottar, *major*, went the way of hundreds before him. The Head gave him six months' final polish, taught him what kind of answers best please a certain kind of examiners, and handed him over to the properly constituted authorities, who passed him into Sandhurst. Here he had sense enough to see that he was in the

Lower Third once more, and behaved with respect towards his seniors, till they in turn respected him, and he was promoted to the rank of corporal, and sat in authority over mixed peoples with all the vices of men and boys combined. His reward was another string of athletic cups, a good-conduct sword, and, at last, Her Majesty's commission as a subaltern in a first-class line regiment. He did not know that he bore with him from school and college a character worth much fine gold, but was pleased to find his mess so kindly. He had plenty of money of his own; his training had set the public-school mask upon his face, and had taught him how many were the "things no fellow can do." By virtue of the same training he kept his pores open and his mouth shut.

The regular working of the Empire shifted his world to India, where he tasted utter loneliness in subaltern's quarters — one room and one bullock-trunk — and, with his mess, learned the new life from the beginning. But there were horses in the land — ponies at reasonable price; there was polo for such as could afford it; there were the disreputable remnants of a pack of hounds; and Cottar worried his way along without too much despair. It dawned on him that a regiment in India was nearer the chance of active service than he had conceived, and that a man might as well study his profession. A major of the new school backed

this idea with enthusiasm, and he and Cottar accumulated a library of military works, and read and argued and disputed far into the nights. But the adjutant said the old thing: "Get to know your men, young un, and they'll follow you anywhere. That's all you want — know your men." Cottar thought he knew them fairly well at cricket and the regimental sports, but he never realised the true inwardness of them till he was sent off with a detachment of twenty to sit down in a mud fort near a rushing river which was spanned by a bridge of boats. When the floods came they went forth and hunted strayed pontoons along the banks. Otherwise there was nothing to do, and the men got drunk, gambled, and quarrelled. They were a sickly crew, for a junior subaltern is by custom saddled with the worst men. Cottar endured their rioting as long as he could, and then sent down-country for a dozen pairs of boxing-gloves.

"I wouldn't blame you for fightin'," said he, "if you only knew how to use your hands; but you don't. Take these things, and I'll show you." The men appreciated his efforts. Now, instead of blaspheming and swearing at a comrade, and threatening to shoot him, they could take him apart, and soothe themselves to exhaustion. As one explained whom Cottar found with a shut eye and a diamond-shaped mouth spitting blood

through an embrasure: "We tried it with the gloves, sir, for twenty minutes, and *that* done us no good, sir. Then we took off the gloves and tried it that way for another twenty minutes, same as you showed us, sir, an' that done us a world o' good. 'Twasn't fightin', sir; there was a bet on."

Cottar dared not laugh, but he invited his men to other sports, such as racing across country in shirt and trousers after a trail of torn paper, and to single-stick in the evenings, till the native population, who had a lust for sport in every form, wished to know whether the white men understood wrestling. They sent in an ambassador, who took the soldiers by the neck and threw them about the dust; and the entire command were all for this new game. They spent money on learning new falls and holds, which was better than buying other doubtful commodities; and the peasantry grinned five deep round the tournaments.

That detachment, who had gone up in bullock-carts, returned to headquarters at an average rate of thirty miles a day, fair heel-and-toe; no sick, no prisoners, and no court martials pending. They scattered themselves among their friends, singing the praises of their lieutenant and looking for causes of offence.

"How did you do it, young un?" the adjutant asked.

"Oh, I sweated the beef off 'em, and then I

sweated some muscle on to 'em. It was rather a lark."

"If that's your way of lookin' at it, we can give you all the larks you want. Young Davies isn't feelin' quite fit, and he's next for detachment duty. 'Care to go for him?"

"'Sure he wouldn't mind? I don't want to shove myself forward, you know."

"You needn't bother on Davies's account. We'll give you the sweepin's of the corps, and you can see what you can make of 'em."

"All right," said Cottar. "It's better fun than loafin' about cantonments."

"Rummy thing," said the adjutant, after Cottar had returned to his wilderness with twenty other devils worse than the first. "If Cottar only knew it, half the women in the station would give their eyes — confound 'em! — to have the young un in tow."

"That accounts for Mrs. Elery sayin' I was workin' my nice new boy too hard," said a wing commander.

"Oh, yes; and 'Why doesn't he come to the band-stand in the evenings?' and 'Can't I get him to make up a four at tennis with the Hammon girls?'" the adjutant snorted. "Look at young Davies makin' an ass of himself over mutton-dressed-as-lamb old enough to be his mother!"

"No one can accuse young Cottar of runnin'

after women, white *or* black," the major replied thoughtfully. "But, then, that's the kind that generally goes the worst mucker in the end."

"Not Cottar. I've only run across one of his muster before — a fellow called Ingles, in South Africa. He was just the same hard-trained, athletic-sports build of animal. Always kept himself in the pink of condition. Didn't do him much good, though. 'Shot at Wesselstroom the week before Majuba. Wonder how the young un will lick his detachment into shape."

Cottar turned up six weeks later, on foot, with his pupils. He never told his experiences, but the men spoke enthusiastically, and fragments of it leaked back to the colonel through sergeants, bâtmen, and the like.

There was great jealousy between the first and second detachments, but the men united in adoring Cottar, and their way of showing it was by sparing him all the trouble that men know how to make for an unloved officer. He sought popularity as little as he had sought it at school, and therefore it came to him. He favoured no one — not even when the company sloven pulled the company cricket-match out of the fire with an unexpected forty-three at the last moment. There was very little getting round him, for he seemed to know by instinct exactly when and where to head off a malingerer; but he did not forget that

the difference between a dazed and sulky junior of the upper school and a bewildered, browbeaten lump of a private fresh from the depot was very small indeed. The sergeants, seeing these things, told him secrets generally hid from young officers. His words were quoted as barrack authority on bets in canteen and at tea; and the veriest shrew of the corps, bursting with charges against other women who had used the cooking-ranges out of turn, forbore to speak when Cottar, as the regulations ordained, asked of a morning if there were "any complaints."

"I'm full o' complaints," said Mrs. Corporal Morrison, "an' I'd kill O'Halloran's fat sow of a wife any day, but ye know how it is. 'E puts 'is head just inside the door, an' looks down 'is blessed nose so bashful, an' 'e whispers, 'Any complaints?' Ye can't complain after that. *I* want to kiss him. Some day I think I will. Heigh-ho! she'll be a lucky woman that gets Young Innocence. See 'im now, girls. Do ye blame me?"

Cottar was cantering across to polo, and he looked a very satisfactory figure of a man as he gave easily to the first excited bucks of his pony, and slipped over a low mud wall to the practice-ground. There were more than Mrs. Corporal Morrison who felt as she did. But Cottar was busy for eleven hours of the day. He did not care to have his tennis spoiled by petticoats in the

court; and after one long afternoon at a garden-party, he explained to his major that this sort of thing was "futile piffle," and the major laughed. Theirs was not a married mess, except for the colonel's wife, and Cottar stood in awe of the good lady. She said "my regiment," and the world knows what that means. None the less, when they wanted her to give away the prizes after a shooting-match, and she refused because one of the prize-winners was married to a girl who had made a jest of her behind her broad back, the mess ordered Cottar to "tackle her," in his best calling-kit. This he did, simply and laboriously, and she gave way altogether.

"She only wanted to know the facts of the case," he explained. "I just told her, and she saw at once."

"Ye-es," said the adjutant. "I expect that's what she did. Comin' to the Fusiliers' dance to-night, Galahad?"

"No, thanks. I've got a fight on with the major." The virtuous apprentice sat up till midnight in the major's quarters, with a stop-watch and a pair of compasses, shifting little painted lead-blocks about a four-inch map.

Then he turned in and slept the sleep of innocence, which is full of healthy dreams. One peculiarity of his dreams he noticed at the beginning of his second hot weather. Two or three

times a month they duplicated or ran in series. He would find himself sliding into dreamland by the same road — a road that ran along a beach near a pile of brushwood. To the right lay the sea, sometimes at full tide, sometimes withdrawn to the very horizon; but he knew it for the same sea. By that road he would travel over a swell of rising ground covered with short, withered grass, into valleys of wonder and unreason. Beyond the ridge, which was crowned with some sort of street-lamp, anything was possible; but up to the lamp it seemed to him that he knew the road as well as he knew the parade-ground. He learned to look forward to the place; for, once there, he was sure of a good night's rest, and Indian hot weather can be rather trying. First, shadowy under closing eyelids, would come the outline of the brushwood-pile; next the white sand of the beach-road, almost overhanging the black, changeful sea; then the turn inland and uphill to the single light. When he was unrestful for any reason, he would tell himself how he was sure to get there — sure to get there — if he shut his eyes and surrendered to the drift of things. But one night after a foolishly hard hour's polo (the thermometer was 94° in his quarters at ten o'clock), sleep stood away from him altogether, though he did his best to find the well-known road, the point where true sleep began. At last he saw the brushwood-pile, and

hurried along to the ridge, for behind him he felt was the wide-awake, sultry world. He reached the lamp in safety, tingling with drowsiness, when a policeman — a common country policeman — sprang up before him and touched him on the shoulder ere he could dive into the dim valley below. He was filled with terror,— the hopeless terror of dreams,— for the policeman said, in the awful, distinct voice of dream-people, "I am Policeman Day coming back from the City of Sleep. You come with me." Georgie knew it was true — that just beyond him in the valley lay the lights of the City of Sleep, where he would have been sheltered, and that this Policeman-Thing had full power and authority to head him back to miserable wakefulness. He found himself looking at the moonlight on the wall, dripping with fright; and he never overcame that horror though he met the Policeman several times that hot weather, and his coming was the forerunner of a bad night.

But other dreams — perfectly absurd ones — filled him with an incommunicable delight. All those that he remembered began by the brushwood-pile. For instance, he found a small clockwork steamer (he had noticed it many nights before) lying by the sea-road, and stepped into it, whereupon it moved with surpassing swiftness over an absolutely level sea. This was glorious,

for he felt he was exploring great matters; and it stopped by a lily carved in stone, which, most naturally, floated on the water. Seeing the lily was labelled "Hong-Kong," Georgie said: "Of course. This is precisely what I expected Hong-Kong would be like. How magnificent!" Thousands of miles farther on it halted at yet another stone lily, labelled "Java"; and this, again, delighted him hugely, because he knew that now he was at the world's end. But the little boat ran on and on till it lay in a deep fresh-water lock, the sides of which were carven marble, green with moss. Lily-pads lay on the water, and reeds arched above. Some one moved among the reeds — some one whom Georgie knew he had travelled to this world's end to reach. Therefore everything was entirely well with him. He was unspeakably happy, and vaulted over the ship's side to find this person. When his feet touched that still water, it changed, with the rustle of unrolling maps, to nothing less than a sixth quarter of the globe, beyond the most remote imagining of man — a place where islands were coloured yellow and blue, their lettering strung across their faces. They gave on unknown seas, and Georgie's urgent desire was to return swiftly across this floating atlas to known bearings. He told himself repeatedly that it was no good to hurry; but still he hurried desperately, and the islands slipped

and slid under his feet, the straits yawned and widened, till he found himself utterly lost in the world's fourth dimension, with no hope of return. Yet only a little distance away he could see the old world with the rivers and mountain-chains marked according to the Sandhurst rules of map-making. Then that person for whom he had come to the Lily Lock (that was its name) ran up across unexplored territories, and showed him a way. They fled hand in hand till they reached a road that spanned ravines, and ran along the edge of precipices, and was tunnelled through mountains. "This goes to our brushwood-pile," said his companion; and all his trouble was at an end. He took a pony, because he understood that this was the Thirty-Mile Ride and he must ride swiftly, and raced through the clattering tunnels and round the curves, always downhill, till he heard the sea to his left, and saw it raging under a full moon, against sandy cliffs. It was heavy going, but he recognised the nature of the country, the dark-purple downs inland, and the bents that whistled in the wind. The road was eaten away in places, and the sea lashed at him—black, foamless tongues of smooth and glossy rollers; but he was sure that there was less danger from the sea than from "Them," whoever "They" were, inland to his right. He knew, too, that he would be safe if he could reach the down with the

lamp on it. This came as he expected: he saw the one light a mile ahead along the beach, dismounted, turned to the right, walked quietly over to the brushwood-pile, found the little steamer had returned to the beach whence he had unmoored it, and — must have fallen asleep, for he could remember no more. "I'm gettin' the hang of the geography of that place," he said to himself, as he shaved next morning. "I must have made some sort of circle. Let's see. The Thirty-Mile Ride (now how the deuce did I know it was called the Thirty-Mile Ride?) joins the sea-road beyond the first down where the lamp is. And that atlas-country lies at the back of the Thirty-Mile Ride, somewhere out to the right beyond the hills and tunnels. Rummy things, dreams. 'Wonder what makes mine fit into each other so?"

He continued on his solid way through the recurring duties of the seasons. The regiment was shifted to another station, and he enjoyed road-marching for two months, with a good deal of mixed shooting thrown in, and when they reached their new cantonments he became a member of the local Tent Club, and chased the mighty boar on horseback with a short stabbing-spear. There he met the *mahseer* of the Poonch, beside whom the tarpon is as a herring, and he who lands him can say that he is a fisherman. This was as new and as fascinating as the big-game shooting that fell

to his portion, when he had himself photographed for the mother's benefit, sitting on the flank of his first tiger.

Then the adjutant was promoted, and Cottar rejoiced with him, for he admired the adjutant greatly, and marvelled who might be big enough to fill his place; so that he nearly collapsed when the mantle fell on his own shoulders, and the colonel said a few sweet things that made him blush. An adjutant's position does not differ materially from that of head of the school, and Cottar stood in the same relation to the colonel as he had to his old Head in England. Only, tempers wear out in hot weather, and things were said and done that tried him sorely, and he made glorious blunders, from which the regimental sergeant-major pulled him with a loyal soul and a shut mouth. Slovens and incompetents raged against him; the weak-minded strove to lure him from the ways of justice; the small-minded — yea, men whom Cottar believed would never do "things no fellow can do" — imputed motives mean and circuitous to actions that he had not spent a thought upon; and he tasted injustice, and it made him very sick. But his consolation came on parade, when he looked down the full companies, and reflected how few were in hospital or cells, and wondered when the time would come to try the machine of his love and labour.

But they needed and expected the whole of a man's working-day, and maybe three or four hours of the night. Curiously enough, he never dreamed about the regiment as he was popularly supposed to. The mind, set free from the day's doings, generally ceased working altogether, or, if it moved at all, carried him along the old beach-road to the downs, the lamp-post, and, once in a while, to terrible Policeman Day. The second time that he returned to the world's lost continent (this was a dream that repeated itself again and again, with variations, on the same ground) he knew that if he only sat still the person from the Lily Lock would help him, and he was not disappointed. Sometimes he was trapped in mines of vast depth hollowed out of the heart of the world, where men in torment chanted echoing songs; and he heard this person coming along through the galleries, and everything was made safe and delightful. They met again in low-roofed Indian railway-carriages that halted in a garden surrounded by gilt-and-green railings, where a mob of stony white people, all unfriendly, sat at breakfast-tables covered with roses, and separated Georgie from his companion, while underground voices sang deep-voiced songs. Georgie was filled with enormous despair till they two met again. They foregathered in the middle of an endless, hot tropic night, and crept into a huge

house that stood, he knew, somewhere north of the railway-station where the people ate among the roses. It was surrounded with gardens, all moist and dripping; and in one room, reached through leagues of whitewashed passages, a Sick Thing lay in bed. Now the least noise, Georgie knew, would unchain some waiting horror, and his companion knew it, too; but when their eyes met across the bed, Georgie was disgusted to see that she was a child — a little girl in strapped shoes, with her black hair combed back from her forehead.

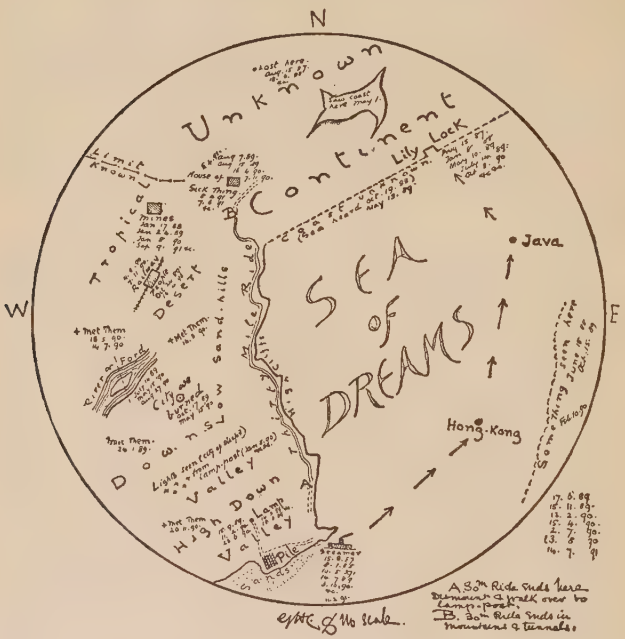
"What disgraceful folly!" he thought. "Now she could do nothing whatever if Its head came off."

Then the Thing coughed, and the ceiling shattered down in plaster on the mosquito-netting, and "They" rushed in from all quarters. He dragged the child through the stifling garden, voices chanting behind them, and they rode the Thirty-Mile Ride under whip and spur along the sandy beach by the booming sea, till they came to the downs, the lamp-post, and the brushwood-pile, which was safety. Very often dreams would break up about them in this fashion, and they would be separated, to endure awful adventures alone. But the most amusing times were when he and she had a clear understanding that it was all make-believe, and walked through mile-wide

roaring rivers without even taking off their shoes, or set light to populous cities to see how they would burn, and were rude as any children to the vague shadows met in their rambles. Later in the night they were sure to suffer for this, either at the hands of the Railway People eating among the roses, or in the tropic uplands at the far end of the Thirty-Mile Ride. Together, this did not much affright them; but often Georgie would hear her shrill cry of "Boy! Boy!" half a world away, and hurry to her rescue before "They" maltreated her.

He and she explored the dark-purple downs as far inland from the brushwood-pile as they dared, but that was always a dangerous matter. The interior was filled with "Them," and "They" went about singing in the hollows, and Georgie and she felt safer on or near the seaboard. So thoroughly had he come to know the place of his dreams that even waking he accepted it as a real country, and made a rough sketch of it. He kept his own counsel, of course; but the permanence of the land puzzled him. His ordinary dreams were as formless and as fleeting as any healthy dreams could be, but once at the brushwood-pile he moved within known limits and could see where he was going. There were months at a time when nothing notable crossed his sleep. Then the dreams would come in a batch of five or six, and next

morning the map that he kept in his writing-case would be written up to date, for Georgie was a most methodical person. There was, indeed, a danger — his seniors said so — of his developing into a regular "Auntie Fuss" of an adjutant, and



when an officer once takes to old-maidism there is more hope for the virgin of seventy than for him.

But fate sent the change that was needed, in the shape of a little winter campaign on the Border,

which, after the manner of little campaigns, flashed out into a very ugly war; and Cottar's regiment was chosen among the first.

"Now," said a major, "this'll shake the cobwebs out of us all — especially you, Galahad; and we can see what your hen-with-one-chick attitude has done for the regiment."

Cottar nearly wept with joy as the campaign went forward. They were fit — physically fit beyond the other troops; they were good children in camp, wet or dry, fed or unfed; and they followed their officers with the quick suppleness and trained obedience of a first-class football fifteen. They were cut off from their apology for a base, and cheerfully cut their way back to it again; they crowned and cleaned out hills full of the enemy with the precision of well-broken dogs of chase; and in the hour of retreat, when, hampered with the sick and wounded of the column, they were persecuted down eleven miles of waterless valley, they, serving as rear-guard, covered themselves with a great glory in the eyes of fellow-professionals. Any regiment can advance, but few know how to retreat with a sting in the tail. Then they turned to make roads, most often under fire, and dismantled some inconvenient mud redoubts. They were the last corps to be withdrawn when the rubbish of the campaign was all swept up; and after a month in standing camp, which tries

morals severely, they departed to their own place in column of fours, singing:

"'E's goin' to do without 'em —
Don't want 'em any more;
'E's goin' to do without 'em,
As 'e's often done before.
'E's goin' to be a martyr
On a 'ighly novel plan,
An' all the boys and girls will say,
'Ow! what a nice young man — man — man!
Ow! what a nice young man!'"

There came out a "Gazette" in which Cottar found that he had been behaving with "courage and coolness and discretion" in all his capacities; that he had assisted the wounded under fire, and blown in a gate, also under fire. Net result, his captaincy and a brevet majority, coupled with the Distinguished Service Order.

As to his wounded, he explained that they were both heavy men, whom he could lift more easily than any one else. "Otherwise, of course, I should have sent out one of my men; and, of course, about that gate business, we were safe the minute we were well under the walls." But this did not prevent his men from cheering him furiously whenever they saw him, or the mess from giving him a dinner on the eve of his departure to England. (A year's leave was among the things he had "snaffled out of the campaign," to use

his own words.) The doctor, who had taken quite as much as was good for him, quoted poetry about "a good blade carving the casques of men," and so on, and everybody told Cottar that he was an excellent person; but when he rose to make his maiden speech they shouted so that he was understood to say, "It isn't any use tryin' to speak with you chaps rottin' me like this. Let's have some pool."

* * * * * * * * * *

It is not unpleasant to spend eight-and-twenty days in an easy-going steamer on warm waters, in the company of a woman who lets you see that you are head and shoulders superior to the rest of the world, even though that woman may be, and most often is, ten counted years your senior. P.& O. boats are not lighted with the disgustful particularity of Atlantic liners. There is more phosphorescence at the bows, and greater silence and darkness by the hand-steering gear aft.

Awful things might have happened to Georgie but for the little fact that he had never studied the first principles of the game he was expected to play. So when Mrs. Zuleika, at Aden, told him how motherly an interest she felt in his welfare, medals, brevet, and all, Georgie took her at the foot of the letter, and promptly talked of his own mother, three hundred miles nearer each day, of his home, and so forth, all the way up the Red

Sea. It was much easier than he had supposed to converse with a woman for an hour at a time. Then Mrs. Zuleika, turning from parental affection, spoke of love in the abstract as a thing not unworthy of study, and in discreet twilights after dinner demanded confidences. Georgie would have been delighted to supply them, but he had none, and did not know it was his duty to manufacture them. Mrs. Zuleika expressed surprise and unbelief, and asked those questions which deep asks of deep. She learned all that was necessary to conviction, and, being very much a woman, resumed (Georgie never knew that she had abandoned) the motherly attitude.

"Do you know," she said, somewhere in the Mediterranean, "I think you're the very dearest boy I have ever met in my life, and I'd like you to remember me a little. You will when you are older, but I want you to remember me now. You'll make some girl very happy."

"Oh! 'Hope so," said Georgie, gravely; "but there's heaps of time for marryin' an' all that sort of thing, ain't there?"

"That depends. Here are your bean-bags for the Ladies' Competition. I think I'm growing too old to care for these *tamashas*."

They were getting up sports, and Georgie was on the committee. He never noticed how perfectly the bags were sewn, but another woman did,

and smiled — once. He liked Mrs. Zuleika greatly. She was a bit old, of course, but uncommonly nice. There was no nonsense about her.

A few nights after they passed Gibraltar his dream returned to him. She who waited by the brushwood-pile was no longer a little girl, but a woman with black hair that grew into a "widow's peak," combed back from her forehead. He knew her for the child in black, the companion of the last six years, and, as it had been in the time of the meetings on the Lost Continent, he was filled with delight unspeakable. "They," for some dreamland reason, were friendly or had gone away that night, and the two flitted together over all their country, from the brushwood-pile up the Thirty-Mile Ride, till they saw the House of the Sick Thing, a pin-point in the distance to the left; stamped through the Railway Waiting-room where the roses lay on the spread breakfast-tables; and returned, by the ford and the city they had once burned for sport, to the great swells of the downs under the lamp-post. Wherever they moved a strong singing followed them underground, but this night there was no panic. All the land was empty except for themselves, and at the last (they were sitting by the lamp-post hand in hand) she turned and kissed him. He woke with a start, staring at the waving curtain of the

cabin door; he could almost have sworn that the kiss was real.

Next morning the ship was rolling in a Biscay sea, and people were not happy; but as Georgie came to breakfast, shaven, tubbed, and smelling of soap, several turned to look at him because of the light in his eyes and the splendour of his countenance.

"Well, you look beastly fit," snapped a neighbour. "Any one left you a legacy in the middle of the Bay?"

Georgie reached for the curry, with a seraphic grin. "I suppose it's the gettin' so near home, and all that. I do feel rather festive this mornin'. 'Rolls a bit, doesn't she?"

Mrs. Zuleika stayed in her cabin till the end of the voyage, when she left without bidding him farewell, and wept passionately on the dock-head for pure joy of meeting her children, who, she had often said, were so like their father.

Georgie headed for his own country, wild with delight of his first long furlough after the lean seasons. Nothing was changed in that orderly life, from the coachman who met him at the station to the white peacock that stormed at the carriage from the stone wall above the shaven lawns. The house took toll of him with due regard to precedence — first the mother; then the father; then the housekeeper, who wept and praised God;

then the butler, and so on down to the under-keeper, who had been dog-boy in Georgie's youth, and called him "Master Georgie," and was reproved by the groom who had taught Georgie to ride.

"Not a thing changed," he sighed contentedly, when the three of them sat down to dinner in the late sunlight, while the rabbits crept out upon the lawn below the cedars, and the big trout in the ponds by the home paddock rose for their evening meal.

"*Our* changes are all over, dear," cooed the mother; "and now I am getting used to your size and your tan (you're very brown, Georgie), I see you haven't changed in the least. You're exactly like the pater."

The father beamed on this man after his own heart,—"youngest major in the army, and should have had the V. C., sir,"—and the butler listened with his professional mask off when Master Georgie spoke of war as it is waged to-day, and his father cross-questioned.

They went out on the terrace to smoke among the roses, and the shadow of the old house lay long across the wonderful English foliage, which is the only living green in the world.

"Perfect! By Jove, it's perfect!" Georgie was looking at the round-bosomed woods beyond the home paddock, where the white pheasant boxes

were ranged; and the golden air was full of a hundred sacred scents and sounds. Georgie felt his father's arm tighten in his.

"It's not half bad — but *hodie mihi, cras tibi*, isn't it? I suppose you'll be turning up some fine day with a girl under your arm, if you haven't one now, eh?"

"You can make your mind easy, sir. I haven't one."

"Not in all these years?" said the mother.

"I hadn't time, mummy. They keep a man pretty busy, these days, in the service, and most of our mess are unmarried, too."

"But you must have met hundreds in society — at balls, and so on?"

"I'm like the Tenth, mummy: I don't dance."

"Don't dance! What have you been doing with yourself, then — backing other men's bills?" said the father.

"Oh, yes; I've done a little of that too; but you see, as things are now, a man has all his work cut out for him to keep abreast of his profession, and my days were always too full to let me lark about half the night."

"Hmm!"— suspiciously.

"It's never too late to learn. We ought to give some kind of housewarming for the people about, now you've come back. Unless you want to go straight up to town, dear?"

"No. I don't want anything better than this. Let's sit still and enjoy ourselves. I suppose there will be something for me to ride if I look for it?"

"Seeing I've been kept down to the old brown pair for the last six weeks because all the others were being got ready for Master Georgie, I should say there might be," the father chuckled. "They're reminding me in a hundred ways that I must take the second place now."

"Brutes!"

"The pater doesn't mean it, dear; but every one has been trying to make your home-coming a success; and you *do* like it, don't you?"

"Perfect! Perfect! There's no place like England — when you've done your work."

"That's the proper way to look at it, my son."

And so up and down the flagged walk till their shadows grew long in the moonlight, and the mother went indoors and played such songs as a small boy once clamoured for, and the squat silver candlesticks were brought in, and Georgie climbed to the two rooms in the west wing that had been his nursery and his playroom in the beginning. Then who should come to tuck him up for the night but the mother? And she sat down on the bed, and they talked for a long hour, as mother and son should, if there is to be any future for the Empire. With a simple woman's deep guile she

asked questions and suggested answers that should have waked some sign in the face on the pillow, and there was neither quiver of eyelid nor quickening of breath, neither evasion nor delay in reply. So she blessed him and kissed him on the mouth, which is not always a mother's property, and said something to her husband later, at which he laughed profane and incredulous laughs.

All the establishment waited on Georgie next morning, from the tallest six-year-old, "with a mouth like a kid glove, Master Georgie," to the under-keeper strolling carelessly along the horizon, Georgie's pet rod in his hand, and "There's a four-pounder risin' below the lasher. You don't 'ave 'em in Injia, Mast — Major Georgie." It was all beautiful beyond telling, even though the mother insisted on taking him out in the landau (the leather had the hot Sunday smell of his youth) and showing him off to her friends at all the houses for six miles round; and the pater bore him up to town and a lunch at the club, where he introduced him, quite carelessly, to not less than thirty ancient warriors whose sons were not the youngest majors in the army and had not the D. S. O. After that it was Georgie's turn; and remembering his friends, he filled up the house with that kind of officer who live in cheap lodgings at Southsea or Montpelier Square, Brompton — good men all, but not well off. The mother perceived that they

needed girls to play with; and as there was no scarcity of girls, the house hummed like a dovecote in spring. They tore up the place for amateur theatricals; they disappeared in the gardens when they ought to have been rehearsing; they swept off every available horse and vehicle, especially the governess-cart and the fat pony; they fell into the trout-ponds; they picnicked and they tennised; and they sat on gates in the twilight, two by two, and Georgie found that he was not in the least necessary to their entertainment.

"My word!" said he, when he saw the last of their dear backs. "They told me they've enjoyed 'emselves, but they haven't done half the things they said they would."

"I know they've enjoyed themselves — immensely," said the mother. "You're a public benefactor, dear."

"Now we can be quiet again, can't we?"

"Oh, quite. I've a very dear friend of mine that I want you to know. She couldn't come with the house so full, because she's an invalid, and she was away when you first came. She's a Mrs. Lacy."

"Lacy! I don't remember the name about here."

"No; they came after you went to India — from Oxford. Her husband died there, and she lost some money, I believe. They bought The

Firs on the Bassett Road. She's a very sweet woman, and we're very fond of them both."

"She's a widow, didn't you say?"

"She has a daughter. Surely I said so, dear?"

"Does she fall into trout-ponds, and gas and giggle, and 'Oh, Major Cottah!' and all that sort of thing?"

"No, indeed. She's a very quiet girl, and very musical. She always came over here with her music-books — composing, you know; and she generally works all day, so you won't —"

"'Talking about Miriam?" said the pater, coming up. The mother edged towards him within elbow-reach. There was no finesse about Georgie's father. "Oh, Miriam's a dear girl. Plays beautifully. Rides beautifully, too. She's a regular pet of the household. Used to call me —" The elbow went home, and ignorant but obedient always, the pater shut himself off.

"What used she to call you, sir?"

"All sorts of pet names. I'm very fond of Miriam."

"'Sounds Jewish — Miriam."

"Jew! You'll be calling yourself a Jew next. She's one of the Herefordshire Lacys. When her aunt dies —" Again the elbow.

"Oh, you won't see anything of her, Georgie. She's busy with her music or her mother all day. Besides, you're going up to town to-morrow, aren't

you? I thought you said something about an Institute meeting?" The mother spoke.

"Go up to town *now!* What nonsense!" Once more the pater was shut off.

"I had some idea of it, but I'm not quite sure," said the son of the house. Why did the mother try to get him away because a musical girl and her invalid parent were expected? He did not approve of unknown females calling his father pet names. He would observe these pushing persons who had been only seven years in the county.

All of which the delighted mother read in his countenance, herself keeping an air of sweet disinterestedness.

"They'll be here this evening for dinner. I'm sending the carriage over for them, and they won't stay more than a week."

"Perhaps I shall go up to town. I don't quite know yet." Georgie moved away irresolutely. There was a lecture at the United Services Institute on the supply of ammunition in the field, and the one man whose theories most irritated Major Cottar would deliver it. A heated discussion was sure to follow, and perhaps he might find himself moved to speak. He took his rod that afternoon and went down to thrash it out among the trout.

"Good sport, dear!" said the mother, from the terrace.

"'Fraid it won't be, mummy. All those men from town, and the girls particularly, have put every trout off his feed for weeks. There isn't one of 'em that cares for fishin'— really. Fancy stampin' and shoutin' on the bank, and tellin' every fish for half a mile exactly what you're goin' to do, and then chuckin' a brute of a fly at him! By Jove, it would scare *me* if I was a trout!"

But things were not as bad as he had expected. The black gnat was on the water, and the water was strictly preserved. A three-quarter-pounder at the second cast set him for the campaign, and he worked down-stream, crouching behind the reed and meadow-sweet; creeping between a hornbeam hedge and a foot-wide strip of bank, where he could see the trout, but where they could not distinguish him from the background; lying almost on his stomach to switch the blue-upright sidewise through the checkered shadows of a gravelly ripple under overarching trees. But he had known every inch of the water since he was four feet high. The aged and astute between sunk roots, with the large and fat that lay in the frothy scum below some strong rush of water, sucking as lazily as carp, came to trouble in their turn, at the hand that imitated so delicately the flicker and wimple of an egg-dropping fly. Consequently, Georgie found himself five miles from

home when he ought to have been dressing for dinner. The housekeeper had taken good care that her boy should not go empty, and before he changed to the white moth he sat down to excellent claret with sandwiches of potted egg and things that adoring women make and men never notice. Then back, to surprise the otter grubbing for fresh-water mussels, the rabbits on the edge of the beechwoods foraging in the clover, and the policeman-like white owl stooping to the little field-mice, till the moon was strong, and he took his rod apart, and went home through well-remembered gaps in the hedges. He fetched a compass round the house, for, though he might have broken every law of the establishment every hour, the law of his boyhood was unbreakable: after fishing you went in by the south garden back-door, cleaned up in the outer scullery, and did not present yourself to your elders and your betters till you had washed and changed.

"Half-past ten, by Jove! Well, we'll make the sport an excuse. They wouldn't want to see me the first evening, at any rate. Gone to bed, probably." He skirted by the open French windows of the drawing-room. "No, they haven't. They look very comfy in there."

He could see his father in his own particular chair, the mother in hers, and the back of a girl at the piano by the big potpourri-jar. The gar

dens looked half divine in the moonlight, and he turned down through the roses to finish his pipe.

A prelude ended, and there floated out a voice of the kind that in his childhood he used to call "creamy"—a full, true contralto; and this is the song that he heard, every syllable of it:

Over the edge of the purple down,
Where the single lamplight gleams,
Know ye the road to the Merciful Town
That is hard by the Sea of Dreams—
Where the poor may lay their wrongs away,
And the sick may forget to weep?
But we—pity us! Oh, pity us!
We wakeful; ah, pity us!—
We must go back with Policeman Day—
Back from the City of Sleep!

Weary they turn from the scroll and crown,
Fetter and prayer and plough—
They that go up to the Merciful Town,
For her gates are closing now.
It is their right in the Baths of Night
Body and soul to steep:
But we—pity us! ah, pity us!
We wakeful; oh, pity us!—
We must go back with Policeman Day—
Back from the City of Sleep!

Over the edge of the purple down,
Ere the tender dreams begin,
Look—we may look—at the Merciful Town,
But we may not enter in!

Outcasts all, from her guarded wall
Back to our watch we creep:
We — pity us! ah, pity us!
We wakeful; oh, pity us! —
We that go back with Policeman Day —
Back from the City of Sleep!

At the last echo he was aware that his mouth was dry and unknown pulses were beating in the roof of it. The housekeeper, who would have it that he must have fallen in and caught a chill, was waiting to catch him on the stairs, and, since he neither saw nor answered her, carried a wild tale abroad that brought his mother knocking at the door.

"Anything happened, dear? Harper said she thought you weren't —"

"No; it's nothing. I'm all right, mummy. *Please* don't bother."

He did not recognise his own voice, but that was a small matter beside what he was considering. Obviously, most obviously, the whole coincidence was crazy lunacy. He proved it to the satisfaction of Major George Cottar, who was going up to town to-morrow to hear a lecture on the supply of ammunition in the field; and having so proved it, the soul and brain and heart and body of Georgie cried joyously: "That's the Lily Lock girl — the Lost Continent girl — the Thirty-Mile Ride girl! — the Brushwood girl! *I* know her!"

He waked, stiff and cramped in his chair, to reconsider the situation by sunlight, when it did not appear normal. But a man must eat, and he went to breakfast, his heart between his teeth, holding himself severely in hand.

"Late, as usual," said the mother. "'My boy, Miss Lacy."

A tall girl in black raised her eyes to his, and Georgie's life training deserted him—just as soon as he realised that she did not know. He stared coolly and critically. There was the abundant black hair, growing in a widow's peak, turned back from the forehead, with that peculiar ripple over the right ear; there were the grey eyes set a little close together; the short upper lip, resolute chin, and the known poise of the head. There was also the small well-cut mouth that had kissed him.

"Georgie—*dear!*" said the mother, amazedly, for Miriam was flushing under the stare.

"I—I beg your pardon!" he gulped. "I don't know whether the mother has told you, but I'm rather an idiot at times, specially before I've had my breakfast. It's—it's a family failing."

He turned to explore among the hot-water dishes on the sideboard, rejoicing that she did not know—she did not know.

His conversation for the rest of the meal was mildly insane, though the mother thought she had never seen her boy look half so handsome. How

could any girl, least of all one of Miriam's discernment, forbear to fall down and worship? But deeply Miriam was displeased. She had never been stared at in that fashion before, and promptly retired into her shell when Georgie announced that he had changed his mind about going to town, and would stay to play with Miss Lacy if she had nothing better to do.

"Oh, but don't let me throw you out. I'm at work. I've things to do all the morning."

"What possessed Georgie to behave so oddly?" the mother sighed to herself. "Miriam's a bundle of feelings — like her mother."

"You compose — don't you? Must be a fine thing to be able to do that. ["Pig — oh, pig!" thought Miriam.] I think I heard you singin' when I came in last night after fishin'. All about a Sea of Dreams, wasn't it? [Miriam shuddered to the core of the soul that afflicted her.] Awfully pretty song. How d' you think of such things?"

"You only composed the music, dear, didn't you?"

"The words too. I'm sure of it," said Georgie, with a sparkling eye. No; she did not know.

"Yeth; I wrote the words too." Miriam spoke slowly, for she knew she lisped when she was nervous.

"Now how *could* you tell, Georgie?" said the mother, as delighted as though the youngest major

in the army were ten years old, showing off before company.

"I was sure of it, somehow. Oh, there are heaps of things about me, mummy, that you don't understand. 'Looks as if it were goin' to be a hot day — for England. Would you care for a ride this afternoon, Miss Lacy? We can start out after tea, if you'd like it."

Miriam could not in decency refuse, but any woman might see she was not filled with delight.

"That will be very nice, if you take the Bassett Road. It will save me sending Martin down to the village," said the mother, filling in gaps.

Like all good managers, the mother had her one weakness — a mania for little strategies that should economise horses and vehicles. Her men-folk complained that she turned them into common carriers, and there was a legend in the family that she had once said to the pater on the morning of a meet: "If you *should* kill near Bassett, dear, and if it isn't too late, would you mind just popping over and matching me this?"

"I knew that was coming. You'd never miss a chance, mother. If it's a fish or a trunk I won't." Georgie laughed.

"It's only a duck. They can do it up very neatly at Mallett's," said the mother, simply. "You won't mind, will you? We'll have a scratch dinner at nine, because it's so hot."

The long summer day dragged itself out for centuries; but at last there was tea on the lawn, and Miriam appeared.

She was in the saddle before he could offer to help, with the clean spring of the child who mounted the pony for the Thirty-Mile Ride. The day held mercilessly, though Georgie got down thrice to look for imaginary stones in Rufus's foot. One cannot say even simple things in broad light, and this that Georgie meditated was not simple. So he spoke seldom, and Miriam was divided between relief and scorn. It annoyed her that the great hulking thing should know she had written the words of the song overnight; for though a maiden may sing her most secret fancies aloud, she does not care to have them trampled over by the male Philistine. They rode into the little red-brick street of Bassett, and Georgie made untold fuss over the disposition of that duck. It must go in just such a package, and be fastened to the saddle in just such a manner, though eight o'clock had struck and they were miles from dinner.

"We must be quick!" said Miriam, bored and angry.

"There's no great hurry; but we can cut over Dowhead Down, and let 'em out on the grass. That will save us half an hour."

The horses capered on the short, sweet-smelling

turf, and the delaying shadows gathered in the valley as they cantered over the great dun down that overhangs Bassett and the Western coaching-road. Insensibly the pace quickened without thought of mole-hills; Rufus, gentleman that he was, waiting on Miriam's Dandy till they should have cleared the rise. Then down the two-mile slope they raced together, the wind whistling in their ears, to the steady throb of eight hooves and the light click-click of the shifting bits.

"Oh, that was glorious!" Miriam cried, reining in. "Dandy and I are old friends, but I don't think we've ever gone better together."

"No; but you've gone quicker, once or twice."

"Really? When?"

Georgie moistened his lips. "Don't you remember the Thirty-Mile Ride — with me — when 'They' were after us — on the beach-road, with the sea to the left — going towards the lamp-post on the downs?"

The girl gasped. "What — what do you mean?" she said hysterically.

"The Thirty-Mile Ride, and — and all the rest of it."

"You mean —? I didn't sing anything about the Thirty-Mile Ride. I know I didn't. I have never told a living soul."

"You told about Policeman Day, and the lamp at the top of the downs, and the City of Sleep.

It all joins on, you know — it's the same country — and it was easy enough to see where you had been."

"Good God! — It joins on — of course it does; but — I have been — you have been — Oh, let's walk, please, or I shall fall off!"

Georgie ranged alongside, and laid a hand that shook below her bridle-hand, pulling Dandy into a walk. Miriam was sobbing as he had seen a man sob under the touch of the bullet.

"It's all right — it's all right," he whispered feebly. "Only — only it's true, you know."

"True! Am I mad?"

"Not unless I'm mad as well. *Do* try to think a minute quietly. How could any one conceivably know anything about the Thirty-Mile Ride having anything to do with you, unless he had been there?"

"But where? But *where?* Tell me!"

"There — wherever it may be — in our country, I suppose. Do you remember the first time you rode it — the Thirty-Mile Ride, I mean? You must."

"It was all dreams — all dreams!"

"Yes, but tell, please; because I know."

"Let me think. I — we were on no account to make any noise — on no account to make any noise." She was staring between Dandy's ears, with eyes that did not see, and a suffocating heart.

"Because 'It' was dying in the big house?" Georgie went on, reining in again.

"There was a garden with green-and-gilt railings — all hot. Do *you* remember?"

"I ought to. I was sitting on the other side of the bed before 'It' coughed and 'They' came in."

"You!" — the deep voice was unnaturally full and strong, and the girl's wide-opened eyes burned in the dusk as she stared him through and through. "Then you're the Boy — my Brushwood Boy, and I've known you all my life!"

She fell forward on Dandy's neck. Georgie forced himself out of the weakness that was overmastering his limbs, and slid an arm round her waist. The head dropped on his shoulder, and he found himself with parched lips saying things that up till then he believed existed only in printed works of fiction. Mercifully the horses were quiet. She made no attempt to draw herself away when she recovered, but lay still, whispering, "Of course you're the Boy, and I didn't know — I didn't know."

"I knew last night; and when I saw you at breakfast — "

"Oh, *that* was why! I wondered at the time. You would, of course."

"I couldn't speak before this. Keep your head where it is, dear. It's all right now — all right now, isn't it?"

"But how was it *I* didn't know — after all these years and years? I remember — oh, what lots of things I remember!"

"Tell me some. I'll look after the horses."

"I remember waiting for you when the steamer came in. Do you?"

"At the Lily Lock, beyond Hong-Kong and Java?"

"Do *you* call it that, too?"

"You told me it was when I was lost in the continent. That was you that showed me the way through the mountains?"

"When the islands slid? It must have been, because you're the only one I remember. All the others were 'Them.'"

"Awful brutes they were, too."

"I remember showing you the Thirty-Mile Ride the first time. You ride just as you used to — then. You *are* you!"

"That's odd. I thought that of you this afternoon. Isn't it wonderful?"

"What does it all mean? Why should you and I of the millions of people in the world have this — this thing between us? What does it mean? I'm frightened."

"This!" said Georgie. The horses quickened their pace. They thought they had heard an order. "Perhaps when we die we may find out more, but it means this now."

There was no answer. What could she say? As the world went, they had known each other rather less than eight and a half hours, but the matter was one that did not concern the world. There was a very long silence, while the breath in their nostrils drew cold and sharp as it might have been a fume of ether.

"That's the second," Georgie whispered. "You remember, don't you?"

"It's not!" — furiously. "It's not!"

"On the downs the other night — months ago. You were just as you are now, and we went over the country for miles and miles."

"It was all empty, too. 'They' had gone away. Nobody frightened us. I wonder why, Boy?"

"Oh, if you remember *that*, you must remember the rest. Confess!"

"I remember lots of things, but I *know* I didn't. I never have — till just now."

"You *did*, dear."

"I know I didn't, because — oh, it's no use keeping anything back! — because I truthfully meant to."

"And truthfully did."

"No; meant to; but some one else came by."

"There wasn't any one else. There never has been."

"There was — there always is. It was another woman — out there on the sea. I saw her. It

was the 26th of May. I've got it written down somewhere."

"Oh, *you've* kept a record of your dreams, too? That's odd about the other woman, because I happened to be on the sea just then."

"I was right. How do I know what you've done when you were awake — and I thought it was only *you!*"

"You never were more wrong in your life. What a little temper you've got! Listen to me a minute, dear." And Georgie, though he knew it not, committed black perjury. "It — it isn't the kind of thing one says to any one, because they'd laugh; but on my word and honour, darling, I've never been kissed by a living soul outside my own people in all my life. Don't laugh, dear. I wouldn't tell any one but you, but it's the solemn truth."

"I knew! You are you. Oh, I *knew* you'd come some day; but I didn't know you were you in the least till you spoke."

"Then give me another."

"And you never cared or looked anywhere? Why, all the round world must have loved you from the very minute they saw you, Boy."

"They kept it to themselves if they did. No; I never cared."

"And we shall be late for dinner — horribly

late. Oh, how can I look at you in the light before your mother — and mine!"

"We'll play you're Miss Lacy till the proper time comes. What's the shortest limit for people to get engaged? S'pose we have got to go through all the fuss of an engagement, haven't we?"

"Oh, I don't want to talk about that. It's so commonplace. I've thought of something that you don't know. I'm sure of it. What's my name?"

"Miri — no, it isn't, by Jove! Wait half a second, and it'll come back to me. You aren't— you can't? Why, *those* old tales — before I went to school! I've never thought of 'em from that day to this. Are you the original, only Annie*an*louise?"

"It was what you always called me ever since the beginning. Oh! We've turned into the avenue, and we must be an hour late."

"What does it matter? The chain goes as far back as those days? It must, of course — of course it must. I've got to ride round with this pestilent old bird — confound him!"

"'"Ha! ha!" said the duck, laughing'— do you remember *that?*"

"Yes, I do — flower-pots on my feet, and all. We've been together all this while; and I've got to say good-bye to you till dinner. *Sure* I'll see

you at dinner-time? *Sure* you won't sneak up to your room, darling, and leave me all the evening? Good-bye, dear — good-bye."

"Good-bye, Boy, good-bye. Mind the arch! Don't let Rufus bolt into his stables. Good-bye. Yes, I'll come down to dinner; but — what shall I do when I see you in the light!"

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

"THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT"

The dense wet heat that hung over the face of land, like a blanket, prevented all hope of sleep in the first instance. The cicalas helped the heat; and the yelling jackals the cicalas. It was impossible to sit still in the dark, empty, echoing house and watch the punkah beat the dead air. So, at ten o'clock of the night, I set my walking-stick on end in the middle of the garden, and waited to see how it would fall. It pointed directly down the moonlit road that leads to the City of Dreadful Night. The sound of its fall disturbed a hare. She limped from her form and ran across to a disused Mahomedan burial-ground, where the jawless skulls and rough-butted shank-bones, heartlessly exposed by the July rains, glimmered like mother o' pearl on the rain-channelled soil. The heated air and the heavy earth had driven the very dead upward for coolness' sake. The hare limped on; snuffed curiously at a fragment of a smoke-stained lamp-shard, and died out in the shadow of a clump of tamarisk trees.

The mat-weaver's hut under the lee of the

Hindu temple was full of sleeping men who lay like sheeted corpses. Overhead blazed the unwinking eye of the Moon. Darkness gives at least a false impression of coolness. It was hard not to believe that the flood of light from above was warm. Not so hot as the Sun, but still sickly warm, and heating the heavy air beyond what was our due. Straight as a bar of polished steel ran the road to the City of Dreadful Night; and on either side of the road lay corpses disposed on beds in fantastic attitudes — one hundred and seventy bodies of men. Some shrouded all in white with bound-up mouths; some naked and black as ebony in the strong light; and one — that lay face upwards with dropped jaw, far away from the others — silvery white and ashen gray.

"A leper asleep; and the remainder wearied coolies, servants, small shopkeepers, and drivers from the hack-stand hard by. The scene — a main approach to Lahore city, and the night a warm one in August." This was all that there was to be seen; but by no means all that one could see. The witchery of the moonlight was everywhere; and the world was horribly changed. The long line of the naked dead, flanked by the rigid silver statue, was not pleasant to look upon. It was made up of men alone. Were the womenkind, then, forced to sleep in the shelter of the stifling mud-huts as best they might? The fretful wail

of a child from a low mud-roof answered the question. Where the children are the mothers must be also to look after them. They need care on these sweltering nights. A black little bullet-head peeped over the coping, and a thin — a painfully thin — brown leg was slid over on to the gutter pipe. There was a sharp clink of glass bracelets; a woman's arm showed for an instant above the parapet, twined itself round the lean little neck, and the child was dragged back, protesting, to the shelter of the bedstead. His thin, high-pitched shriek died out in the thick air almost as soon as it was raised; for even the children of the soil found it too hot to weep.

More corpses; more stretches of moonlit, white road; a string of sleeping camels at rest by the wayside; a vision of scudding jackals; *ekka*-ponies asleep — the harness still on their backs, and the brass-studded country carts, winking in the moonlight — and again more corpses. Wherever a grain cart atilt, a tree trunk, a sawn log, a couple of bamboos and a few handfuls of thatch cast a shadow, the ground is covered with them. They lie — some face downwards, arms folded, in the dust; some with clasped hands flung up above their heads; some curled up dog-wise; some thrown like limp gunny-bags over the side of the grain-carts; and some bowed with their brows on their knees in the full glare of the Moon. It would be

a comfort if they were only given to snoring; but they are not, and the likeness to corpses is unbroken in all respects save one. The lean dogs snuff at them and turn away. Here and there a tiny child lies on his father's bedstead, and a protecting arm is thrown round it in every instance. But, for the most part, the children sleep with their mothers on the housetops. Yellow-skinned, white-toothed pariahs are not to be trusted within reach of brown bodies.

A stifling hot blast from the mouth of the Delhi Gate nearly ends my resolution of entering the City of Dreadful Night at this hour. It is a compound of all evil savours, animal and vegetable, that a walled city can brew in a day and a night. The temperature within the motionless groves of plantain and orange-trees outside the city walls seems chilly by comparison. Heaven help all sick persons and young children within the city to-night! The high house-walls are still radiating heat savagely, and from obscure side gullies fetid breezes eddy that ought to poison a buffalo. But the buffaloes do not heed. A drove of them are parading the vacant main street; stopping now and then to lay their ponderous muzzles against the closed shutters of a grain-dealer's shop, and to blow thereon like grampuses.

Then silence follows — the silence that is full of the night noises of a great city. A stringed instru-

ment of some kind is just, and only just, audible. High overhead some one throws open a window, and the rattle of the wood-work echoes down the empty street. On one of the roofs a hookah is in full blast; and the men are talking softly as the pipe gutters. A little farther on, the noise of conversation is more distinct. A slit of light shows itself between the sliding shutters of a shop. Inside, a stubble-bearded, weary-eyed trader is balancing his account-books among the bales of cotton prints that surround him. Three sheeted figures bear him company, and throw in a remark from time to time. First he makes an entry, then a remark; then passes the back of his hand across his streaming forehead. The heat in the built-in street is fearful. Inside the shops it must be almost unendurable. But the work goes on steadily; entry, guttural growl, and uplifted hand-stroke succeeding each other with the precision of clockwork.

A policeman—turbanless and fast asleep—lies across the road on the way to the Mosque of Wazir Khan. A bar of moonlight falls across the forehead and eyes of the sleeper, but he never stirs. It is close upon midnight, and the heat seems to be increasing. The open square in front of the Mosque is crowded with corpses; and a man must pick his way carefully for fear of treading on them. The moonlight stripes the Mosque's

high front of coloured enamel work in broad diagonal bands; and each separate dreaming pigeon in the niches and corners of the masonry throws a squab little shadow. Sheeted ghosts rise up wearily from their pallets, and flit into the dark depths of the building. Is it possible to climb to the top of the great Minars, and thence to look down on the city? At all events, the attempt is worth making, and the chances are that the door of the staircase will be unlocked. Unlocked it is; but a deeply-sleeping janitor lies across the threshold, face turned to the Moon. A rat dashes out of his turban at the sound of approaching footsteps. The man grunts, opens his eyes for a minute, turns round and goes to sleep again. All the heat of a decade of fierce Indian summers is stored in the pitch-black, polished walls of the corkscrew staircase. Half-way up, there is something alive, warm, and feathery; and it snores. Driven from step to step as it catches the sound of my advance, it flutters to the top and reveals itself as a yellow-eyed, angry kite. Dozens of kites are asleep on this and the other Minars, and on the domes below. There is the shadow of a cool, or at least a less sultry breeze at this height; and, refreshed thereby, turn to look on the City of Dreadful Night.

Doré might have drawn it! Zola could describe it—this spectacle of sleeping thousands in the moonlight and in the shadow of the Moon.

The roof-tops are crammed with men, women, and children; and the air is full of undistinguishable noises. They are restless in the City of Dreadful Night; and small wonder. The marvel is that they can even breathe. If you gaze intently at the multitude, you can see that they are almost as uneasy as a daylight crowd; but the tumult is subdued. Everywhere, in the strong light, you can watch the sleepers turning to and fro; shifting their beds and again resettling them. In the pit-like courtyards of the houses there is the same movement.

The pitiless Moon shows it all. Shows, too, the plains outside the city, and here and there a hand's-breadth of the Ravee without the walls. Shows lastly a splash of glittering silver on a house-top almost directly below the mosque Minar. Some poor soul has risen to throw a jar of water over his fevered body; the tinkle of the falling water strikes faintly on the ear. Two or three other men, in far-off corners of the City of Dreadful Night, follow his example, and the water flashes like heliographic signals. A small cloud passes over the face of the Moon, and the city and its inhabitants — clear drawn in black and white before — fade into masses of black and deeper black. Still the unrestful noise continues, the sigh of a great city overwhelmed with the heat, and of a people seeking in vain for rest. It is

only the lower-class women who sleep on the housetops. What must the torment be in the latticed zenanas, where a few lamps are still twinkling? There are footfalls in the court below. It is the *Muezzin* — faithful minister; but he ought to have been here an hour ago to tell the Faithful that prayer is better than sleep — the sleep that will not come to the city.

The *Muezzin* fumbles for a moment with the door of one of the Minars, disappears awhile, and a bull-like roar — a magnificent bass thunder — tells that he has reached the top of the Minar. They must hear the cry to the banks of the shrunken Ravee itself! Even across the courtyard it is almost overpowering. The cloud drifts by and shows him outlined in black against the sky, hands laid upon his ears, and broad chest heaving with the play of his lungs — "Allah ho Akbar"; then a pause while another *Muezzin* somewhere in the direction of the Golden Temple takes up the call — "Allah ho Akbar." Again and again; four times in all; and from the bedsteads a dozen men have risen up already. — "I bear witness that there is no God but God." What a splendid cry it is, the proclamation of the creed that brings men out of their beds by scores at midnight! Once again he thunders through the same phrase, shaking with the vehemence of his own voice; and then, far and near, the night

air rings with "Mahomed is the Prophet of God." It is as though he were flinging his defiance to the far-off horizon, where the summer lightning plays and leaps like a bared sword. Every *Muezzin* in the city is in full cry, and some men on the roof-tops are beginning to kneel. A long pause precedes the last cry, "La ilaha Illallah," and the silence closes up on it, as the ram on the head of a cotton-bale.

The *Muezzin* stumbles down the dark stairway grumbling in his beard. He passes the arch of the entrance and disappears. Then the stifling silence settles down over the City of Dreadful Night. The kites on the Minar sleep again, snoring more loudly, the hot breeze comes up in puffs and lazy eddies, and the Moon slides down towards the horizon. Seated with both elbows on the parapet of the tower, one can watch and wonder over that heat-tortured hive till the dawn. "How do they live down there? What do they think of? When will they awake?" More tinkling of sluiced water-pots; faint jarring of wooden bedsteads moved into or out of the shadows; uncouth music of stringed instruments softened by distance into a plaintive wail, and one low grumble of far-off thunder. In the courtyard of the mosque the janitor, who lay across the threshold of the Minar when I came up, starts wildly in his sleep, throws his hands above his head, mutters something, and

falls back again. Lulled by the snoring of the kites — they snore like over-gorged humans — I drop off into an uneasy doze, conscious that three o'clock has struck, and that there is a slight — a very slight — coolness in the atmosphere. The city is absolutely quiet now, but for some vagrant dog's love-song. Nothing save dead heavy sleep.

Several weeks of darkness pass after this. For the Moon has gone out. The very dogs are still, and I watch for the first light of the dawn before making my way homeward. Again the noise of shuffling feet. The morning call is about to begin, and my night watch is over. "Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!" The east grows gray, and presently saffron; the dawn wind comes up as though the *Muezzin* had summoned it; and, as one man, the City of Dreadful Night rises from its bed and turns its face towards the dawning day. With return of life comes return of sound. First a low whisper, then a deep bass hum; for it must be remembered that the entire city is on the housetops. My eyelids weighed down with the arrears of long deferred sleep, I escape from the Minar through the courtyard and out into the square beyond, where the sleepers have risen, stowed away the bedsteads, and are discussing the morning hookah. The minute's freshness of the air has gone, and it is as hot as at first.

"Will the Sahib, out of his kindness, make

room?" What is it? Something borne on men's shoulders comes by in the half-light, and I stand back. A woman's corpse going down to the burning-ghat, and a bystander says, "She died at midnight from the heat." So the city was of Death as well as Night, after all.

GEORGIE PORGIE

GEORGIE PORGIE

Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie,
Kissed the girls and made them cry.
When the girls came out to play
Georgie Porgie ran away.

If you will admit that a man has no right to enter his drawing-room early in the morning, when the housemaid is setting things right and clearing away the dust, you will concede that civilised people who eat out of china and own card-cases have no right to apply their standard of right and wrong to an unsettled land. When the place is made fit for their reception, by those men who are told off to the work, they can come up, bringing in their trunks their own society and the Decalogue, and all the other apparatus. Where the Queen's Law does not carry, it is irrational to expect an observance of other and weaker rules. The men who run ahead of the cars of Decency and Propriety, and make the jungle ways straight, cannot be judged in the same manner as the stay-at-home folk of the ranks of the regular *Tchin*.

Not many months ago the Queen's Law stopped

a few miles north of Thayetmyo on the Irrawaddy. There was no very strong Public Opinion up to that limit, but it existed to keep men in order. When the Government said that the Queen's Law must carry up to Bhamo and the Chinese border, the order was given, and some men whose desire was to be ever a little in advance of the rush of Respectability flocked forward with the troops. These were the men who could never pass examinations, and would have been too pronounced in their ideas for the administration of bureau-worked Provinces. The Supreme Government stepped in as soon as might be, with codes and regulations, and all but reduced New Burma to the dead Indian level; but there was a short time during which strong men were necessary and ploughed a field for themselves.

Among the fore-runners of Civilisation was Georgie Porgie, reckoned by all who knew him a strong man. He held an appointment in Lower Burma when the order came to break the Frontier, and his friends called him Georgie Porgie because of the singularly Burmese-like manner in which he sang a song whose first line is something like the words "Georgie Porgie." Most men who have been in Burma will know the song. It means: "Puff, puff, puff, puff, great steamboat!" Georgie sang it to his banjo, and his friends shouted with delight, so that you could hear them far away in the teak-forest.

When he went to Upper Burma he had no special regard for God or Man, but he knew how to make himself respected, and to carry out the mixed Military-Civil duties that fell to most men's share in those months. He did his office work and entertained, now and again, the detachments of fever-shaken soldiers who blundered through his part of the world in search of a flying party of dacoits. Sometimes he turned out and dressed down dacoits on his own account; for the country was still smouldering and would blaze when least expected. He enjoyed these charivaris, but the dacoits were not so amused. All the officials who came in contact with him departed with the idea that Georgie Porgie was a valuable person, well able to take care of himself, and, on that belief, he was left to his own devices.

At the end of a few months he wearied of his solitude, and cast about for company and refinement. The Queen's Law had hardly begun to be felt in the country, and Public Opinion, which is more powerful than the Queen's Law, had yet to come. Also, there was a custom in the country which allowed a white man to take to himself a wife of the Daughters of Heth upon due payment. The marriage was not quite so binding as is the *nikkah* ceremony among Mahomedans, but the wife was very pleasant.

When all our troops are back from Burma there

will be a proverb in their mouths, "As thrifty as a Burmese wife," and pretty English ladies will wonder what in the world it means.

The headman of the village next to Georgie Porgie's post had a fair daughter who had seen Georgie Porgie and loved him from afar. When news went abroad that the Englishman with the heavy hand who lived in the stockade was looking for a housekeeper, the headman came in and explained that, for five hundred rupees down, he would entrust his daughter to Georgie Porgie's keeping, to be maintained in all honour, respect, and comfort, with pretty dresses, according to the custom of the country. This thing was done, and Georgie Porgie never repented it.

He found his rough-and-tumble house put straight and made comfortable, his hitherto unchecked expenses cut down by one half, and himself petted and made much of by his new acquisition, who sat at the head of his table and sang songs to him and ordered his Madrassee servants about, and was in every way as sweet and merry and honest and winning a little woman as the most exacting of bachelors could have desired. No race, men say who know, produces such good wives and heads of households as the Burmese. When the next detachment tramped by on the war-path the Subaltern in Command found at Georgie Porgie's table a hostess to be deferential

to, a woman to be treated in every way as one occupying an assured position. When he gathered his men together next dawn and replunged into the jungle, he thought regretfully of the nice little dinner and the pretty face, and envied Georgie Porgie from the bottom of his heart. Yet *he* was engaged to a girl at Home, and that is how some men are constructed.

The Burmese girl's name was not a pretty one; but as she was promptly christened Georgina by Georgie Porgie, the blemish did not matter. Georgie Porgie thought well of the petting and the general comfort, and vowed that he had never spent five hundred rupees to a better end.

After three months of domestic life, a great idea struck him. Matrimony—English matrimony—could not be such a bad thing after all. If he were so thoroughly comfortable at the Back of Beyond with this Burmese girl who smoked cheroots, how much more comfortable would he be with a sweet English maiden who would not smoke cheroots, and would play upon a piano instead of a banjo? Also he had a desire to return to his kind, to hear a Band once more, and to feel how it felt to wear a dress-suit again. Decidedly, Matrimony would be a very good thing. He thought the matter out at length of evenings, while Georgina sang to him, or asked him why he was so silent, and whether she had done any-

thing to offend him. As he thought he smoked, and as he smoked he looked at Georgina, and in his fancy turned her into a fair, thrifty, amusing, merry little English girl, with hair coming low down on her forehead, and perhaps a cigarette between her lips. Certainly not a big, thick, Burma cheroot, of the brand that Georgina smoked. He would wed a girl with Georgina's eyes and most of her ways. But not all. She could be improved upon. Then he blew thick smoke-wreaths through his nostrils and stretched himself. He would taste marriage. Georgina had helped him to save money, and there were six months' leave due to him.

"See here, little woman," he said, "we must put by more money for these next three months. I want it." That was a direct slur on Georgina's housekeeping; for she prided herself on her thrift; but since her God wanted money she would do her best.

"You want money?" she said with a little laugh. "I *have* money. Look!" She ran to her own room and fetched out a small bag of rupees. "Of all that you give me, I keep back some. See! One hundred and seven rupees. Can you want more money than that? Take it. It is my pleasure if you use it." She spread out the money on the table and pushed it towards him with her quick, little, pale yellow fingers.

Georgie Porgie never referred to economy in the household again.

Three months later, after the despatch and receipt of several mysterious letters which Georgina could not understand, and hated for that reason, Georgie Porgie said that he was going away and she must return to her father's house and stay there.

Georgina wept. She would go with her God from the world's end to the world's end. Why should she leave him? She loved him.

"I am only going to Rangoon," said Georgie Porgie. "I shall be back in a month, but it is safer to stay with your father. I will leave you two hundred rupees."

"If you go for a month, what need of two hundred? Fifty are more than enough. There is some evil here. Do not go, or at least let me go with you."

Georgie Porgie does not like to remember that scene even at this date. In the end he got rid of Georgina by a compromise of seventy-five rupees. She would not take more. Then he went by steamer and rail to Rangoon.

The mysterious letters had granted him six months' leave. The actual flight and an idea that he might have been treacherous hurt severely at the time, but as soon as the big steamer was well out into the blue, things were easier, and Georgina's

face, and the queer little stockaded house, and the memory of the rushes of shouting dacoits by night, the cry and struggle of the first man that he had ever killed with his own hand, and a hundred other more intimate things, faded and faded out of Georgie Porgie's heart, and the vision of approaching England took its place. The steamer was full of men on leave, all rampantly jovial souls who had shaken off the dust and sweat of Upper Burma and were as merry as schoolboys. They helped Georgie Porgie to forget.

Then came England with its luxuries and decencies and comforts, and Georgie Porgie walked in a pleasant dream upon pavements of which he had nearly forgotten the ring, wondering why men in their senses ever left Town. He accepted his keen delight in his furlough as the reward of his services. Providence further arranged for him another and greater delight — all the pleasures of a quiet English wooing, quite different from the brazen businesses of the East, when half the community stand back and bet on the result, and the other half wonder what Mrs. So-and-So will say to it.

It was a pleasant girl and a perfect summer, and a big country-house near Petworth where there are acres and acres of purple heather and high-grassed water-meadows to wander through. Georgie Porgie felt that he had at last found something worth

the living for, and naturally assumed that the next thing to do was to ask the girl to share his life in India. She, in her ignorance, was willing to go. On this occasion there was no bartering with a village headman. There was a fine middle-class wedding in the country, with a stout Papa and a weeping Mamma, and a best man in purple and fine linen, and six snub-nosed girls from the Sunday-School to throw roses on the path between the tombstones up to the Church door. The local paper described the affair at great length, even down to giving the hymns in full. But that was because the Direction were starving for want of material.

Then came a honeymoon at Arundel, and the Mamma wept copiously before she allowed her one daughter to sail away to India under the care of Georgie Porgie the Bridegroom. Beyond any question, Georgie Porgie was immensely fond of his wife, and she was devoted to him as the best and greatest man in the world. When he reported himself at Bombay he felt justified in demanding a good station for his wife's sake; and, because he had made a little mark in Burma and was beginning to be appreciated, they allowed him nearly all that he asked for, and posted him to a station which we will call Sutrain. It stood upon several hills, and was styled officially a "Sanitarium," for the good reason that the drainage was utterly

neglected. Here Georgie Porgie settled down, and found married life come very naturally to him. He did not rave, as do many bridegrooms, over the strangeness and delight of seeing his own true love sitting down to breakfast with him every morning "as though it were the most natural thing in the world." "He had been there before," as the Americans say, and, checking the merits of his own present grace by those of Georgina, he was more and more inclined to think that he had done well.

But there was no peace or comfort across the Bay of Bengal, under the teak-trees where Georgina lived with her father, waiting for Georgie Porgie to return. The headman was old, and remembered the war of '51. He had been to Rangoon, and knew something of the ways of the *Kullahs*. Sitting in front of his door in the evenings, he taught Georgina a dry philosophy which did not console her in the least.

The trouble was that she loved Georgie Porgie just as much as the French girl in the English History books loved the priest whose head was broken by the King's bullies. One day she disappeared from the village, with all the rupees that Georgie Porgie had given her, and a very small smattering of English — also gained from Georgie Porgie.

The headman was angry at first, but lit a fresh

cheroot and said something uncomplimentary about the sex in general. Georgina had started on a search for Georgie Porgie, who might be in Rangoon, or across the Black Water, or dead, for aught that she knew. Chance favoured her. An old Sikh policeman told her that Georgie Porgie had crossed the Black Water. She took a steerage-passage from Rangoon and went to Calcutta, keeping the secret of her search to herself.

In India every trace of her was lost for six weeks, and no one knows what trouble of heart she must have undergone.

She reappeared, four hundred miles north of Calcutta, steadily heading northwards, very worn and haggard, but very fixed in her determination to find Georgie Porgie. She could not understand the language of the people; but India is infinitely charitable, and the women-folk along the Grand Trunk gave her food. Something made her believe that Georgie Porgie was to be found at the end of that pitiless road. She may have seen a sepoy who knew him in Burma, but of this no one can be certain. At last she found a regiment on the line of march, and met there one of the many subalterns whom Georgie Porgie had invited to dinner in the far-off, old days of the dacoit-hunting. There was a certain amount of amusement among the tents when Georgina threw herself at the man's feet and began to cry.

There was no amusement when her story was told; but a collection was made, and that was more to the point. One of the subalterns knew of Georgie Porgie's whereabouts, but not of his marriage. So he told Georgina and she went her way joyfully to the north, in a railway carriage where there was rest for tired feet and shade for a dusty little head. The marches from the train through the hills into Sutrain were trying, but Georgina had money, and families journeying in bullock-carts gave her help. It was an almost miraculous journey, and Georgina felt sure that the good spirits of Burma were looking after her. The hill-road to Sutrain is a chilly stretch, and Georgina caught a bad cold. Still there was Georgie Porgie at the end of all the trouble to take her up in his arms and pet her, as he used to do in the old days when the stockade was shut for the night and he had approved of the evening meal. Georgina went forward as fast as she could; and her good spirits did her one last favour.

An Englishman stopped her, in the twilight, just at the turn of the road into Sutrain, saying, "Good Heavens! What are you doing here?"

He was Gillis, the man who had been Georgie Porgie's assistant in Upper Burma, and who occupied the next post to Georgie Porgie's in the jungle. Georgie Porgie had applied to have him to work with at Sutrain because he liked him.

"I have come," said Georgina simply. "It was such a long way, and I have been months in coming. Where is his house?"

Gillis gasped. He had seen enough of Georgina in the old times to know that explanations would be useless. You cannot explain things to the Oriental. You must show.

"I'll take you there," said Gillis, and he led Georgina off the road, up the cliff, by a little pathway, to the back of a house set on a platform cut into the hillside.

The lamps were just lit, but the curtains were not drawn. "Now look," said Gillis, stopping in front of the drawing-room window. Georgina looked and saw Georgie Porgie and the Bride.

She put her hand up to her hair, which had come out of its top-knot and was straggling about her face. She tried to set her ragged dress in order, but the dress was past pulling straight, and she coughed a queer little cough, for she really had taken a very bad cold. Gillis looked, too, but while Georgina only looked at the Bride once, turning her eyes always on Georgie Porgie, Gillis looked at the Bride all the time.

"What are you going to do?" said Gillis, who held Georgina by the wrist, in case of any unexpected rush into the lamplight. "Will you go in and tell that English woman that you lived with her husband?"

"No," said Georgina faintly. "Let me go. I am going away. I swear that I am going away." She twisted herself free and ran off into the dark.

"Poor little beast!" said Gillis, dropping on to the main road. "I'd ha' given her something to get back to Burma with. What a narrow shave, though! And that angel would never have forgiven it."

This seems to prove that the devotion of Gillis was not entirely due to his affection for Georgie Porgie.

The Bride and the Bridegroom came out into the verandah after dinner, in order that the smoke of Georgie Porgie's cheroots might not hang in the new drawing-room curtains.

"What is that noise down there?" said the Bride. Both listened.

"Oh," said Georgie Porgie, "I suppose some brute of a hillman has been beating his wife."

"Beating—his—wife! How ghastly!" said the Bride. "Fancy *your* beating *me!*" She slipped an arm round her husband's waist, and, leaning her head against his shoulder, looked out across the cloud-filled valley in deep content and security.

But it was Georgina crying, all by herself, down the hillside, among the stones of the water-course where the washermen wash the clothes.

WITH THE NIGHT MAIL

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A STORY OF 2000 A.D.

(Together with extracts from the magazine in which it appeared)

AT nine o'clock of a gusty winter night I stood on the lower stages of one of the G. P. O. outward mail towers. My purpose was a run to Quebec in "Postal Packet 162 or such other as may be appointed"; and the Postmaster-General himself countersigned the order. This talisman opened all doors, even those in the despatching-caisson at the foot of the tower, where they were delivering the sorted Continental mail. The bags lay packed close as herrings in the long grey underbodies which our G. P. O. still calls "coaches." Five such coaches were filled as I watched, and were shot up the guides to be locked on to their waiting packets three hundred feet nearer the stars.

From the despatching-caisson I was conducted by a courteous and wonderfully learned official—Mr. L. L. Geary, Second Despatcher of the Western Route—to the Captains' Room (this wakes an

echo of old romance), where the mail captains come on for their turn of duty. He introduces me to the captain of "162"—Captain Purnall, and his relief, Captain Hodgson. The one is small and dark; the other large and red; but each has the brooding sheathed glance characteristic of eagles and aeronauts. You can see it in the pictures of our racing professionals, from L. V. Rautsch to little Ada Warrleigh—that fathomless abstraction of eyes habitually turned through naked space.

On the notice-board in the Captains' Room, the pulsing arrows of some twenty indicators register, degree by geographical degree, the progress of as many homeward-bound packets. The word "Cape" rises across the face of a dial; a gong strikes: the South African mid-weekly mail is in at the Highgate Receiving Towers. That is all. It reminds one comically of the traitorous little bell which in pigeon-fanciers' lofts notifies the return of a homer.

"Time for us to be on the move," says Captain Purnall, and we are shot up by the passenger-lift to the top of the despatch-towers. "Our coach will lock on when it is filled and the clerks are aboard." . . .

"No. 162" waits for us in Slip E of the topmost stage. The great curve of her back shines frostily under the lights, and some minute alteration of trim makes her rock a little in her holding-down slips.

Captain Purnall frowns and dives inside. Hissing softly, "162" comes to rest as level as a rule. From her North Atlantic Winter nose-cap (worn bright as diamond with boring through uncounted leagues of hail, snow, and ice) to the inset of her three built-out propeller-shafts is some two hundred and forty feet. Her extreme diameter, carried well forward, is thirty-seven. Contrast this with the nine hundred by ninety-five of any crack liner, and you will realize the power that must drive a hull through all weathers at more than the emergency speed of the *Cyclonic!*

The eye detects no joint in her skin plating save the sweeping hair-crack of the bow-rudder—Magniac's rudder that assured us the dominion of the unstable air and left its inventor penniless and half-blind. It is calculated to Castelli's "gull-wing" curve. Raise a few feet of that all but invisible plate three-eighths of an inch and she will yaw five miles to port or starboard ere she is under control again. Give her full helm and she returns on her track like a whip-lash. Cant the whole forward—a touch on the wheel will suffice—and she sweeps at your good direction up or down. Open the complete circle and she presents to the air a mushroom-head that will bring her up all standing within a half mile.

"Yes," says Captain Hodgson, answering my thought, "Castelli thought he'd discovered the

secret of controlling aeroplanes when he'd only found out how to steer dirigible balloons. Magniac invented his rudder to help war-boats ram each other; and war went out of fashion and Magniac he went out of his mind because he said he couldn't serve his country any more. I wonder if any of us ever know what we're really doing."

"If you want to see the coach locked you'd better go aboard. It's due now," says Mr. Geary. I enter through the door amidships. There is nothing here for display. The inner skin of the gas-tanks comes down to within a foot or two of my head and turns over just short of the turn of the bilges. Liners and yachts disguise their tanks with decoration, but the G. P. O. serves them raw under a lick of grey official paint. The inner skin shuts off fifty feet of the bow and as much of the stern, but the bow-bulkhead is recessed for the lift-shunting apparatus as the stern is pierced for the shaft-tunnels. The engine-room lies almost amidships. Forward of it, extending to the turn of the bow tanks, is an aperture—a bottomless hatch at present—into which our coach will be locked. One looks down over the coamings three hundred feet to the despatching-caisson whence voices boom upward. The light below is obscured to a sound of thunder, as our coach rises on its guides. It enlarges rapidly from a postage-stamp to a playing-card; to a punt and last a pontoon. The two clerks, its crew, do not even

look up as it comes into place. The Quebec letters fly under their fingers and leap into the docketed racks, while both captains and Mr. Geary satisfy themselves that the coach is locked home. A clerk passes the way-bill over the hatch-coaming. Captain Purnall thumb-marks and passes it to Mr. Geary. Receipt has been given and taken. "Pleasant run," says Mr. Geary, and disappears through the door which a foot-high pneumatic compressor locks after him.

"A-ah!" sighs the compressor released. Our holding-down clips part with a tang. We are clear.

Captain Hodgson opens the great colloid underbody porthole through which I watch over-lighted London slide eastward as the gale gets hold of us. The first of the low winter clouds cuts off the well-known view and darkens Middlesex. On the south edge of it I can see a postal packet's light ploughing through the white fleece. For an instant she gleams like a star ere she drops toward the Highgate Receiving Towers. "The Bombay Mail," says Captain Hodgson, and looks at his watch. "She's forty minutes late."

"What's our level?" I ask.

"Four thousand. Aren't you coming up on the bridge?"

The bridge (let us ever praise the G. P. O. as a repository of ancientest tradition!) is represented by a view of Captain Hodgson's legs where he

stands on the Control Platform that runs thwartships overhead. The bow colloid is unshuttered and Captain Purnall, one hand on the wheel, is feeling for a fair slant. The dial shows 4300 feet.

"It's steep to-night," he mutters, as tier on tier of cloud drops under. "We generally pick up an easterly draught below three thousand at this time o' the year. I hate slathering through fluff."

"So does Van Cutsem. Look at him huntin' for a slant!" says Captain Hodgson. A fog-light breaks cloud a hundred fathoms below. The Antwerp Night Mail makes her signal and rises between two racing clouds far to port, her flanks blood-red in the glare of Sheerness Double Light. The gale will have us over the North Sea in half-an-hour, but Captain Purnall lets her go composedly—nosing to every point of the compass as she rises.

"Five thousand—six, six thousand eight hundred"—the dip-dial reads ere we find the easterly drift, heralded by a flurry of snow at the thousand fathom level. Captain Purnall rings up the engines and keys down the governor on the switch before him. There is no sense in urging machinery when Aeolus himself gives you good knots for nothing. We are away in earnest now—our nose notched home on our chosen star. At this level the lower clouds are laid out, all neatly combed by the dry fingers of the East. Below that again is the strong

westerly blow through which we rose. Overhead, a film of southerly drifting mist draws a theatrical gauze across the firmament. The moonlight turns the lower strata to silver without a stain except where our shadow underruns us. Bristol and Cardiff Double Lights (those statelily inclined beams over Severnmouth) are dead ahead of us; for we keep the Southern Winter Route. Coventry Central, the pivot of the English system, stabs upward once in ten seconds its spear of diamond light to the north; and a point or two off our starboard bow The Leek, the great cloud-breaker of Saint David's Head, swings its unmistakable green beam twenty-five degrees each way. There must be half a mile of fluff over it in this weather, but it does not affect The Leek.

"Our planet's overlighted if anything," says Captain Purnall at the wheel, as Cardiff-Bristol slides under. "I remember the old days of common white verticals that 'ud show two or three hundred feet up in a mist, if you knew where to look for 'em. In really fluffy weather they might as well have been under your hat. One could get lost coming home then, an' have some fun. Now, it's like driving down Piccadilly."

He points to the pillars of light where the cloud-breakers bore through the cloud-floor. We see nothing of England's outlines: only a white pavement pierced in all directions by these manholes of

variously coloured fire—Holy Island's white and red—St. Bee's interrupted white, and so on as far as the eye can reach. Blessed be Sargent, Ahrens, and the Dubois brothers, who invented the cloud-breakers of the world whereby we travel in security!

"Are you going to lift for The Shamrock?" asks Captain Hodgson. Cork Light (green, fixed) enlarges as we rush to it. Captain Purnall nods. There is heavy traffic hereabouts—the cloud-bank beneath us is streaked with running fissures of flame where the Atlantic boats are hurrying Londonward just clear of the fluff. Mail-packets are supposed, under the Conference rules, to have the five-thousand-foot lanes to themselves, but the foreigner in a hurry is apt to take liberties with English air. "No. 162" lifts to a long-drawn wail of the breeze in the fore-flange of the rudder and we make Valencia (white, green, white) at a safe 7000 feet, dipping our beam to an incoming Washington packet.

There is no cloud on the Atlantic, and faint streaks of cream round Dingle Bay show where the driven seas hammer the coast. A big S. A. T. A. liner (*Société Anonyme des Transports Aëriens*) is diving and lifting half a mile below us in search of some break in the solid west wind. Lower still lies a disabled Dane: she is telling the liner all about it in International. Our General Communication dial has caught her talk and begins to eavesdrop.

Captain Hodgson makes a motion to shut it off but checks himself. "Perhaps you'd like to listen," he says.

"*Argol* of St. Thomas," the Dane whimpers. "Report owners three starboard shaft collar-bearings fused. Can make Flores as we are, but impossible further. Shall we buy spares at Fayal?"

The liner acknowledges and recommends inverting the bearings. The *Argol* answers that she has already done so without effect, and begins to relieve her mind about cheap German enamels for collar-bearings. The Frenchman assents cordially, cries "*Courage, mon ami,*" and switches off.

Their lights sink under the curve of the ocean.

"That's one of Lundt & Bleamers' boats," says Captain Hodgson. "Serves 'em right for putting German compos in their thrust-blocks. *She* won't be in Fayal to-night! By the way, wouldn't you like to look round the engine-room?"

I have been waiting eagerly for this invitation and I follow Captain Hodgson from the control-platform, stooping low to avoid the bulge of the tanks. We know that Fleury's gas can lift anything, as the world-famous trials of '89 showed, but its almost indefinite powers of expansion necessitate vast tank room. Even in this thin air the lift-shunts are busy taking out one-third of its normal lift, and still "162" must be checked by an occasional downdraw of the rudder or our flight would

become a climb to the stars. Captain Purnall prefers an overlifted to an underlifted ship; but no two captains trim ship alike. "When *I* take the bridge," says Captain Hodgson, "you'll see me shunt forty per cent. of the lift out of the gas and run her on the upper rudder. With a swoop upward instead of a swoop downward, *as* you say. Either way will do. It's only habit. Watch our dip-dial! Tim fetches her down once every thirty knots as regularly as breathing."

So is it shown on the dip-dial. For five or six minutes the arrow creeps from 6700 to 7300. There is the faint "szgee" of the rudder, and back slides the arrow to 6000 on a falling slant of ten or fifteen knots.

"In heavy weather you jockey her with the screws as well," says Captain Hodgson, and, unslipping the jointed bar which divides the engine-room from the bare deck, he leads me on to the floor.

Here we find Fleury's Paradox of the Bulk-headed Vacuum—which we accept now without thought—literally in full blast. The three engines are H. T. & T. assisted-vacuo Fleury turbines running from 3000 to the Limit—that is to say, up to the point when the blades make the air "bell"—cut out a vacuum for themselves precisely as over-driven marine propellers used to do. "162's" Limit is low on account of the small size of her

nine screws, which, though handier than the old colloid Thelussons, "bell" sooner. The midships engine, generally used as a reinforce, is not running; so the port and starboard turbine vacuum-chambers draw direct into the return-mains.

The turbines whistle reflectively. From the low-arched expansion-tanks on either side the valves descend pillarwise to the turbine-chests, and thence the obedient gas whirls through the spirals of blades with a force that would whip the teeth out of a power-saw. Behind, is its own pressure held in leash or spurred on by the lift-shunts; before it, the vacuum where Fleury's Ray dances in violet-green bands and whirled turbillons of flame. The jointed U-tubes of the vacuum-chamber are pressure-tempered colloid (no glass would endure the strain for an instant) and a junior engineer with tinted spectacles watches the Ray intently. It is the very heart of the machine—a mystery to this day. Even Fleury who begat it and, unlike Magniac, died a multi-millionaire, could not explain how the restless little imp shuddering in the U-tube can, in the fractional fraction of a second, strike the furious blast of gas into a chill greyish-green liquid that drains (you can hear it trickle) from the far end of the vacuum through the eduction-pipes and the mains back to the bilges. Here it returns to its gaseous, one had almost written sagacious, state and climbs to work afresh. Bilge-tank, upper tank,

dorsal-tank, expansion-chamber, vacuum, main-return (as a liquid), and bilge-tank once more is the ordained cycle. Fleury's Ray sees to that; and the engineer with the tinted spectacles sees to Fleury's Ray. If a speck of oil, if even the natural grease of the human finger touch the hooded terminals, Fleury's Ray will wink and disappear and must be laboriously built up again. This means half a day's work for all hands and an expense of one hundred and seventy-odd pounds to the G. P. O. for radium-salts and such trifles.

"Now look at our thrust-collars. You won't find much German compo there. Full-jewelled, you see," says Captain Hodgson as the engineer shunts open the top of a cap. Our shaft-bearings are C. M. C. (Commercial Minerals Company) stones, ground with as much care as the lens of a telescope. They cost £37 apiece. So far we have not arrived at their term of life. These bearings came from "No. 97," which took them over from the old *Dominion of Light* which had them out of the wreck of the *Perseus* aeroplane in the years when men still flew wooden kites over oil engines!

They are a shining reproof to all low-grade German "ruby" enamels, so-called "boort" facings, and the dangerous and unsatisfactory alumina compounds which please dividend-hunting owners and turn skippers crazy.

The rudder-gear and the gas lift-shunt, seated

side by side under the engine-room dials, are the only machines in visible motion. The former sighs from time to time as the oil plunger rises and falls half an inch. The latter, cased and guarded like the U-tube aft, exhibits another Fleury Ray, but inverted and more green than violet. Its function is to shunt the lift out of the gas, and this it will do without watching. That is all! A tiny pump-rod wheezing and whining to itself beside a sputtering green lamp. A hundred and fifty feet aft down the flat-topped tunnel of the tanks a violet light, restless and irresolute. Between the two, three white-painted turbine-trunks, like eel-baskets laid on their side, accentuate the empty perspectives. You can hear the trickle of the liquefied gas flowing from the vacuum into the bilge-tanks and the soft *gluck-glock* of gas-locks closing as Captain Purnall brings "162" down by the head. The hum of the turbines and the boom of the air on our skin is no more than a cotton-wool wrapping to the universal stillness. And we are running an eighteen-second mile.

I peer from the fore end of the engine-room over the hatch-coamings into the coach. The mail-clerks are sorting the Winnipeg, Calgary, and Medicine Hat bags; but there is a pack of cards ready on the table.

Suddenly a bell thrills; the engineers run to the turbine-valves and stand by; but the spectacled

slave of the Ray in the U-tube never lifts his head. He must watch where he is. We are hard-braked and going astern; there is language from the Control Platform.

"Tim's sparking badly about something," says the unruffled Captain Hodgson. "Let's look."

Captain Purnall is not the suave man we left half an hour since, but the embodied authority of the G. P. O. Ahead of us floats an ancient, aluminum-patched, twin-screw tramp of the dingiest, with no more right to the 5000-foot lane than has a horse-cart to a modern road. She carries an obsolete "barbette" conning-tower—a six-foot affair with railed platform forward—and our warning beam plays on the top of it as a policeman's lantern flashes on the area sneak. Like a sneak-thief, too, emerges a shock-headed navigator in his shirt-sleeves. Captain Purnall wrenches open the colloid to talk with him man to man. There are times when Science does not satisfy.

"What under the stars are you doing here, you sky-scraping chimney-sweep?" he shouts as we two drift side by side. "Do you know this is a Mail-lane? You call yourself a sailor, sir? You ain't fit to peddle toy balloons to an Esquimaux. Your name and number! Report and get down, and be——!"

"I've been blown up once," the shock-headed man cries, hoarsely, as a dog barking. "I don't

care two flips of a contact for anything *you* can do, Postey."

"Don't you, sir? But I'll make you care. I'll have you towed stern first to Disko and broke up. You can't recover insurance if you're broke for obstruction. Do you understand *that?*"

Then the stranger bellows: "Look at my propellers! There's been a wulli-wa down below that has knocked us into umbrella-frames! We've been blown up about forty thousand feet! We're all one conjuror's watch inside! My mate's arm's broke; my engineer's head's cut open; my Ray went out when the engines smashed; and . . . and . . . for pity's sake give me my height, Captain! We doubt we're dropping."

"Six thousand eight hundred. Can you hold it?" Captain Purnall overlooks all insults, and leans half out of the colloid, staring and snuffing. The stranger leaks pungently.

"We ought to blow into St. John's with luck. We're trying to plug the fore-tank now, but she's simply whistling it away," her captain wails.

"She's sinking like a log," says Captain Purnall in an undertone. "Call up the Banks Mark Boat, George." Our dip-dial shows that we, keeping abreast the tramp, have dropped five hundred feet the last few minutes.

Captain Purnall presses a switch and our signal

beam begins to swing through the night, twizzling spokes of light across infinity.

"That'll fetch something," he says, while Captain Hodgson watches the General Communicator. He has called up the North Banks Mark Boat, a few hundred miles west, and is reporting the case.

"I'll stand by you," Captain Purnall roars to the lone figure on the conning-tower.

"Is it as bad as that?" comes the answer. "She isn't insured. She's mine."

"Might have guessed as much," mutters Hodgson. "Owner's risk is the worst risk of all!"

"Can't I fetch St. John's—not even with this breeze?" the voice quavers.

"Stand by to abandon ship. Haven't you *any* lift in you, fore or aft?"

"Nothing but the midship tanks, and they're none too tight. You see, my Ray gave out and——" he coughs in the reek of the escaping gas.

"You poor devil!" This does not reach our friend. "What does the Mark Boat say, George?"

"Wants to know if there's any danger to traffic. Says she's in a bit of weather herself, and can't quit station. I've turned in a General Call, so even if they don't see our beam some one's bound to help—or else we must. Shall I clear our slings? Hold on! Here we are! A Planet liner, too! She'll be up in a tick!"

"Tell her to have her slings ready," cries his

brother captain. "There won't be much time to spare . . . Tie up your mate," he roars to the tramp.

"My mate's all right. It's my engineer. He's gone crazy."

"Shunt the lift out of him with a spanner. Hurry!"

"But I can make St. John's if you'll stand by."

"You'll make the deep, wet Atlantic in twenty minutes. You're less than fifty-eight hundred now. Get your papers."

A Planet liner, east bound, heaves up in a superb spiral and takes the air of us humming. Her underbody colloid is open and her transporter-slings hang down like tentacles. We shut off our beam as she adjusts herself—steering to a hair—over the tramp's conning-tower. The mate comes up, his arm strapped to his side, and stumbles into the cradle. A man with a ghastly scarlet head follows, shouting that he must go back and build up his Ray. The mate assures him that he will find a nice new Ray all ready in the liner's engine-room. The bandaged head goes up wagging excitedly. A youth and a woman follow. The liner cheers hollowly above us, and we see the passengers' faces at the saloon colloid.

"That's a pretty girl. What's the fool waiting for now?" says Captain Purnall.

The skipper comes up, still appealing to us to stand by and see him fetch St. John's. He dives

below and returns—at which we little human beings in the void cheer louder than ever—with the ship's kitten. Up fly the liner's hissing slings; her underbody crashes home and she hurtles away again. The dial shows less than 3000 feet.

The Mark Boat signals we must attend to the derelict, now whistling her death-song, as she falls beneath us in long sick zigzags.

"Keep our beam on her and send out a General Warning," says Captain Purnall, following her down.

There is no need. Not a liner in air but knows the meaning of that vertical beam and gives us and our quarry a wide berth.

"But she'll drown in the water, won't she?" I ask.

"Not always," is his answer. "I've known a derelict up-end and sift her engines out of herself and flicker round the Lower Lanes for three weeks on her forward tanks only. We'll run no risks. Pith her, George, and look sharp. There's weather ahead."

Captain Hodgson opens the underbody colloid, swings the heavy pithing-iron out of its rack which in liners is generally cased as a smoking-room settee, and at two hundred feet releases the catch. We hear the whir of the crescent-shaped arms opening as they descend. The derelict's forehead is punched in, starred across, and rent diagonally. She falls

stern first, our beam upon her; slides like a lost soul down that pitiless ladder of light, and the Atlantic takes her.

"A filthy business," says Hodgson. "I wonder what it must have been like in the old days?"

The thought had crossed my mind, too. What if that wavering carcass had been filled with the men of the old days, each one of them taught (*that* is the horror of it!) that after death he would very possibly go for ever to unspeakable torment?

And scarcely a generation ago, we (one knows now that we are only our fathers re-enlarged upon the earth), *we*, I say, ripped and rammed and pithed to admiration.

Here Tim, from the Control Platform, shouts that we are to get into our inflators and to bring him his at once.

We hurry into the heavy rubber suits—the engineers are already dressed—and inflate at the air-pump taps. G. P. O. inflators are thrice as thick as a racing man's "flickers," and chafe abominably under the armpits. George takes the wheel until Tim has blown himself up to the extreme of rotundity. If you kicked him off the c. p. to the deck he would bounce back. But it is "162" that will do the kicking.

"The Mark Boat's mad—stark ravin' crazy," he snorts, returning to command. "She says there's a bad blow-out ahead and wants me to pull over to

Greenland. I'll see her pithed first! We wasted half an hour fussing over that dead duck down under, and now I'm expected to go rubbin' my back all round the Pole. What does she think a Postal packet's made of? Gummed silk? Tell her we're coming on straight, George."

George buckles him into the Frame and switches on the Direct Control. Now under Tim's left toe lies the port-engine Accelerator; under his left heel the Reverse, and so with the other foot. The lift-shunt stops stand out on the rim of the steering-wheel where the fingers of his left hand can play on them. At his right hand is the midships engine lever ready to be thrown into gear at a moment's notice. He leans forward in his belt, eyes glued to the colloid, and one ear cocked toward the General Communicator. Henceforth he is the strength and direction of "162," through whatever may befall.

The Banks Mark Boat is reeling out pages of A. B. C. Directions to the traffic at large. We are to secure all "loose objects"; hood up our Fleury Rays; and "on no account to attempt to clear snow from our conning-towers till the weather abates." Under-powered craft, we are told, can ascend to the limit of their lift, mail-packets to look out for them accordingly; the lower lanes westward are pitting very badly, "with frequent blow-outs, vortices, laterals, etc."

Still the clear dark holds up unblemished. The

only warning is the electric skin-tension (I feel as though I were a lace-maker's pillow) and an irritability which the gibbering of the General Communicator increases almost to hysteria.

We have made eight thousand feet since we pithed the tramp and our turbines are giving us an honest two hundred and ten knots.

Very far to the west an elongated blur of red, low down, shows us the North Banks Mark Boat. There are specks of fire round her rising and falling —bewildered planets about an unstable sun—helpless shipping hanging on to her light for company's sake. No wonder she could not quit station.

She warns us to look out for the back-wash of the bad vortex in which (her beam shows it) she is even now reeling.

The pits of gloom about us begin to fill with very faintly luminous films—wreathing and uneasy shapes. One forms itself into a globe of pale flame that waits shivering with eagerness till we sweep by. It leaps monstrously across the blackness, alights on the precise tip of our nose, pirouettes there an instant, and swings off. Our roaring bow sinks as though that light were lead—sinks and recovers to lurch and stumble again beneath the next blow-out. Tim's fingers on the lift-shunt strike chords of numbers—1:4:7:—2:4:6:—7:5:3, and so on; for he is running by his tanks only, lifting or lowering her against the uneasy air. All three en-

gines are at work, for the sooner we have skated over this thin ice the better. Higher we dare not go. The whole upper vault is charged with pale krypton vapours, which our skin-friction may excite to unholy manifestations. Between the upper and lower levels—5000 and 7000, hints the Mark Boat—we may perhaps bolt through if . . . Our bow clothes itself in blue flame and falls like a sword. No human skill can keep pace with the changing tensions. A vortex has us by the beak and we dive down a two-thousand foot slant at an angle (the dip-dial and my bouncing body record it) of thirty-five. Our turbines scream shrilly; the propellers cannot bite on the thin air; Tim shunts the lift out of five tanks at once and by sheer weight drives her bulletwise through the maelstrom till she cushions with a jar on an upgust, three thousand feet below.

"*Now* we've done it," says George in my ear. "Our skin-friction, that last slide, has played Old Harry with the tensions! Look out for laterals, Tim; she'll want some holding."

"I've got her," is the answer. "Come *up*, old woman."

She comes up nobly, but the laterals buffet her left and right like the pinions of angry angels. She is jolted off her course four ways at once, and cuffed into place again, only to be swung aside and dropped into a new chaos. We are never without

a corposant grinning on our bows or rolling head over heels from nose to midships, and to the crackle of electricity around and within us is added once or twice the rattle of hail—hail that will never fall on any sea. Slow we must or we may break our back, pitch-poling.

"Air's a perfectly elastic fluid," roars George above the tumult. "About as elastic as a head sea off the Fastnet, ain't it?"

He is less than just to the good element. If one intrudes on the Heavens when they are balancing their volt-accounts; if one disturbs the High Gods' market-rates by hurling steel hulls at ninety knots across tremblingly adjusted electric tensions, one must not complain of any rudeness in the reception. Tim met it with an unmoved countenance, one corner of his under lip caught up on a tooth, his eyes fleeting into the blackness twenty miles ahead, and the fierce sparks flying from his knuckles at every turn of the hand. Now and again he shook his head to clear the sweat trickling from his eyebrows, and it was then that George, watching his chance, would slide down the life-rail and swab his face quickly with a big red handkerchief. I never imagined that a human being could so continuously labour and so collectedly think as did Tim through that Hell's half-hour when the flurry was at its worst. We were dragged hither and yon by warm or frozen suctions, belched up on the tops of wulli-

was, spun down by vortices and clubbed aside by laterals under a dizzying rush of stars in the company of a drunken moon. I heard the rushing click of the midship-engine-lever sliding in and out, the low growl of the lift-shunts, and, louder than the yelling winds without, the scream of the bow-rudder gouging into any lull that promised hold for an instant. At last we began to claw up on a cant, bow-rudder and port-propeller together; only the nicest balancing of tanks saved us from spinning like the rifle-bullet of the old days.

"We've got to hitch to windward of that Mark Boat somehow," George cried.

"There's no windward," I protested feebly, where I swung shackled to a stanchion. "How can there be?"

He laughed—as we pitched into a thousand foot blow-out—that red man laughed beneath his inflated hood!

"Look!" he said. "We must clear those refugees with a high lift."

The Mark Boat was below and a little to the sou'west of us, fluctuating in the centre of her distraught galaxy. The air was thick with moving lights at every level. I take it most of them were trying to lie head to wind, but, not being hydras, they failed. An under-tanked Moghrabi boat had risen to the limit of her lift, and, finding no improvement, had dropped a couple of thousand. There

she met a superb wulli-wa, and was blown up spinning like a dead leaf. Instead of shutting off she went astern and, naturally, rebounded as from a wall almost into the Mark Boat, whose language (our G. C. took it in) was humanly simple.

"If they'd only ride it out quietly it 'ud be better," said George in a calm, while we climbed like a bat above them all. "But some skippers *will* navigate without enough lift. What does that Tad-boat think she is doing, Tim?"

"Playin' kiss in the ring," was Tim's unmoved reply. A Trans-Asiatic Direct liner had found a smooth and butted into it full power. But there was a vortex at the tail of that smooth, so the T. A. D. was flipped out like a pea from off a finger-nail, braking madly as she fled down and all but over-ending.

"Now I hope she's satisfied," said Tim. "I'm glad I'm not a Mark Boat . . . Do I want help?" The General Communicator dial had caught his ear. "George, you may tell that gentleman with my love —love, remember, George—that I do not want help. Who *is* the officious sardine-tin?"

"A Rimouski drogher on the look-out for a tow."

"Very kind of the Rimouski drogher. This postal packet isn't being towed at present."

"Those droghers will go anywhere on a chance of salvage," George explained. "We call 'em kittiwakes."

A long-beaked, bright steel ninety-footer floated at ease for one instant within hail of us, her slings coiled ready for rescues, and a single hand in her open tower. He was smoking. Surrendered to the insurrection of the airs through which we tore our way, he lay in absolute peace. I saw the smoke of his pipe ascend untroubled ere his boat dropped, it seemed, like a stone in a well.

We had just cleared the Mark Boat and her disorderly neighbours when the storm ended as suddenly as it had begun. A shooting-star to northward filled the sky with the green blink of a meteorite dissipating itself in our atmosphere.

Said George: "That may iron out all the tensions." Even as he spoke, the conflicting winds came to rest; the levels filled; the laterals died out in long, easy swells; the air-ways were smoothed before us. In less than three minutes the covey round the Mark Boat had shipped their power-lights and whirred away upon their businesses.

"What's happened?" I gasped. The nerve-storm within and the volt-tingle without had passed: my inflators weighed like lead.

"God, He knows!" said Captain George soberly. "That old shooting-star's skin-friction has discharged the different levels. I've seen it happen before. Phew! What a relief!"

We dropped from ten to six thousand and got rid of our clammy suits. Tim shut off and stepped out

of the Frame. The Mark Boat was coming up behind us. He opened the colloid in that heavenly stillness and mopped his face.

"Hello, Williams!" he cried. "A degree or two out o' station, ain't you?"

"May be," was the answer from the Mark Boat. "I've had some company this evening."

"So I noticed. Wasn't that quite a little draught?"

"I warned you. Why didn't you pull out north? The east-bound packets have."

"Me? Not till I'm running a Polar consumptives' sanatorium boat. I was squinting through a colloid before you were out of your cradle, my son."

"I'd be the last man to deny it," the captain of the Mark Boat replies softly. "The way you handled her just now—I'm a pretty fair judge of traffic in a volt-hurry—it was a thousand revolutions beyond anything even *I've* ever seen."

Tim's back supples visibly to this oiling. Captain George on the c. p. winks and points to the portrait of a singularly attractive maiden pinned up on Tim's telescope bracket above the steering-wheel.

I see. Wholly and entirely do I see!

There is some talk overhead of "coming round to tea on Friday," a brief report of the derelict's fate, and Tim volunteers as he descends: "For an A. B. C. man young Williams is less of a high-

tension fool than some. . . . Were you thinking of taking her on, George? Then I'll just have a look round that port-thrust—seems to me it's a trifle warm—and we'll jog along."

The Mark Boat hums off joyously and hangs herself up in her appointed eyrie. Here she will stay a shutterless observatory; a life-boat station; a salvage tug; a court of ultimate appeal-cum-meteorological bureau for three hundred miles in all directions, till Wednesday next when her relief slides across the stars to take her buffeted place. Her black hull, double conning-tower, and ever-ready slings represent all that remains to the planet of that odd old word authority. She is responsible only to the Aerial Board of Control—the A. B. C. of which Tim speaks so flippantly. But that semi-elected, semi-nominated body of a few score of persons of both sexes, controls this planet. "Transportation is Civilization," our motto runs. Theoretically, we do what we please so long as we do not interfere with the traffic *and all it implies*. Practically, the A. B. C. confirms or annuls all international arrangements and, to judge from its last report, finds our tolerant, humorous, lazy little planet only too ready to shift the whole burden of public administration on its shoulders.

I discuss this with Tim, sipping maté on the c. p. while George fans her along over the white blur of the Banks in beautiful upward curves of fifty miles

each. The dip-dial translates them on the tape in flowing freehand.

Tim gathers up a skein of it and surveys the last few feet, which record "162's" path through the volt-flurry.

"I haven't had a fever-chart like this to show up in five years," he says ruefully.

A postal packet's dip-dial records every yard of every run. The tapes then go to the A. B. C., which collates and makes composite photographs of them for the instruction of captains. Tim studies his irrevocable past, shaking his head.

"Hello! Here's a fifteen-hundred-foot drop at fifty-five degrees! We must have been standing on our heads then, George."

"You don't say so," George answers. "I fancied I noticed it at the time."

George may not have Captain Purnall's catlike swiftness, but he is all an artist to the tips of the broad fingers that play on the shunt-stops. The delicious flight-curves come away on the tape with never a waver. The Mark Boat's vertical spindle of light lies down to eastward, setting in the face of the following stars. Westward, where no planet should rise, the triple verticals of Trinity Bay (we keep still to the Southern route) make a low-lifting haze. We seem the only thing at rest under all the heavens; floating at ease till the earth's revolution shall turn up our landing-towers.

And minute by minute our silent clock gives us a sixteen-second mile.

"Some fine night," says Tim, "we'll be even with that clock's Master."

"He's coming now," says George, over his shoulder. "I'm chasing the night west."

The stars ahead dim no more than if a film of mist had been drawn under unobserved, but the deep air-boom on our skin changes to a joyful shout.

"The dawn-gust," says Tim. "It'll go on to meet the Sun. Look! Look! There's the dark being crammed back over our bows! Come to the after-colloid. I'll show you something."

The engine-room is hot and stuffy; the clerks in the coach are asleep, and the Slave of the Ray is ready to follow them. Tim slides open the aft colloid and reveals the curve of the world—the ocean's deepest purple—edged with fuming and intolerable gold. Then the Sun rises and through the colloid strikes out our lamps. Tim scowls in his face.

"Squirrels in a cage," he mutters. "That's all we are. Squirrels in a cage! He's going twice as fast as us. Just you wait a few years, my shining friend, and we'll take steps that will amaze you. *We'll* Joshua you!"

Yes, that is our dream: to turn all earth into the Vale of Ajalon at our pleasure. So far, we can drag

out the dawn to twice its normal length in these latitudes. But some day—even on the Equator—we shall hold the Sun level in his full stride.

Now we look down on a sea thronged with heavy traffic. A big submersible breaks water suddenly. Another and another follows with a swash and a suck and a savage bubbling of relieved pressures. The deep-sea freighters are rising to lung up after the long night, and the leisurely ocean is all patterned with peacock's eyes of foam.

"We'll lung up, too," says Tim, and when we return to the c. p. George shuts off, the colloids are opened, and the fresh air sweeps her out. There is no hurry. The old contracts (they will be revised at the end of the year) allow twelve hours for a run which any packet can put behind her in ten. So we breakfast in the arms of an easterly slant which pushes us along at a languid twenty.

To enjoy life, and tobacco, begin both on a sunny morning half a mile or so above the dappled Atlantic cloud-belts and after a volt-flurry which has cleared and tempered your nerves. While we discussed the thickening traffic with the superiority that comes of having a high level reserved to ourselves, we heard (and I for the first time) the morning hymn on a Hospital boat.

She was cloaked by a skein of ravelled fluff beneath us and we caught the chant before she rose into the sunlight. "*Oh, ye Winds of God,*" sang

the unseen voices: "*bless ye the Lord! Praise Him and magnify Him for ever!*"

We slid off our caps and joined in. When our shadow fell across her great open platforms they looked up and stretched out their hands neighbourly while they sang. We could see the doctors and the nurses and the white-button-like faces of the cot-patients. She passed slowly beneath us, heading northward, her hull, wet with the dews of the night, all ablaze in the sunshine. So took she the shadow of a cloud and vanished, her song continuing. "*Oh, ye holy and humble men of heart, bless ye the Lord! Praise Him and magnify Him for ever.*"

"She's a public lunger or she wouldn't have been singing the *Benedicite;* and she's a Greenlander or she wouldn't have snow-blinds over her colloids," said George at last. "She'll be bound for Frederikshavn or one of the Glacier sanatoriums for a month. If she was an accident ward she'd be hung up at the eight-thousand-foot level. Yes—consumptives."

"Funny how the new things are the old things. I've read in books," Tim answered, "that savages used to haul their sick and wounded up to the tops of hills because microbes were fewer there. We hoist 'em into sterilized air for a while. Same idea. How much do the doctors say we've added to the average life of a man?"

"Thirty years," says George with a twinkle in his eye. "Are we going to spend 'em all up here, Tim?"

"Flap ahead, then. Flap ahead. Who's hindering?" the senior captain laughed, as we went in.

We held a good lift to clear the coastwise and Continental shipping; and we had need of it. Though our route is in no sense a populated one, there is a steady trickle of traffic this way along. We met Hudson Bay furriers out of the Great Preserve, hurrying to make their departure from Bonavista with sable and black fox for the insatiable markets. We overcrossed Keewatin liners, small and cramped; but their captains, who see no land between Trepassy and Blanco, know what gold they bring back from West Africa. Trans-Asiatic Directs we met, soberly ringing the world round the Fiftieth Meridian at an honest seventy knots; and white-painted Ackroyd & Hunt fruiters out of the south fled beneath us, their ventilated hulls whistling like Chinese kites. Their market is in the North among the northern sanatoria where you can smell their grape-fruit and bananas across the cold snows. Argentine beef boats we sighted too, of enormous capacity and unlovely outline. They, too, feed the northern health stations in ice-bound ports where submersibles dare not rise.

Yellow-bellied ore-flats and Ungava petrol-tanks punted down leisurely out of the north, like strings

of unfrightened wild duck. It does not pay to "fly" minerals and oil a mile farther than is necessary; but the risks of transhipping to submersibles in the ice-pack off Nain or Hebron are so great that these heavy freighters fly down to Halifax direct, and scent the air as they go. They are the biggest tramps aloft except the Athabasca grain-tubs. But these last, now that the wheat is moved, are busy, over the world's shoulder, timber-lifting in Siberia.

We held to the St. Lawrence (it is astonishing how the old water-ways still pull us children of the air), and followed his broad line of black between its drifting ice-blocks, all down the Park that the wisdom of our fathers—but every one knows the Quebec run.

We dropped to the Heights Receiving Towers twenty minutes ahead of time, and there hung at ease till the Yokohoma Intermediate Packet could pull out and give us our proper slip. It was curious to watch the action of the holding-down clips all along the frosty river front as the boats cleared or came to rest. A big Hamburger was leaving Pont Levis and her crew, unshipping the platform railings, began to sing "Elsinore"—the oldest of our chanteys. You know it of course:

Mother Rugen's tea-house on the Baltic—
Forty couple waltzing on the floor!
And you can watch my Ray,
For I must go away
And dance with Ella Sweyn at Elsinore!

Then, while they sweated home the covering-plates:

Nor-Nor-Nor-Nor-
West from Sourabaya to the Baltic—
Ninety knot an hour to the Skaw!
Mother Rugen's tea-house on the Baltic
And a dance with Ella Sweyn at Elsinore!

The clips parted with a gesture of indignant dismissal, as though Quebec, glittering under her snows, were casting out these light and unworthy lovers. Our signal came from the Heights. Tim turned and floated up, but surely then it was with passionate appeal that the great tower arms flung open—or did I think so because on the upper staging a little hooded figure also opened her arms wide toward her father?

In ten seconds the coach with its clerks clashed down to the receiving-caisson; the hostlers displaced the engineers at the idle turbines, and Tim, prouder of this than all, introduced me to the maiden of the photograph on the shelf. "And by the way," said he to her, stepping forth in sunshine under the hat of civil life, "I saw young Williams in the Mark Boat. I've asked him to tea on Friday."

AERIAL BOARD OF CONTROL

Lights

No changes in English Inland lights for week ending Dec. 18th.

Cape Verde—Week ending Dec. 18. Verde inclined guide-light changes from 1st proximo to triple flash—green white green—in place of occulting red as heretofore. The warning light for Harmattan winds will be continuous vertical glare (white) on all oases of trans-Saharan N. E. by E. Main Routes.

Invercargil (N. Z.)—From 1st prox.: extreme southerly light (double red) will exhibit white beam inclined 45 degrees on approach of Southerly Buster. Traffic flies high off this coast between April and October.

Table Bay—Devil's Peak Glare removed to Simonsberg. Traffic making Table Mountain coastwise keep all lights from Three Anchor Bay at least two thousand feet under, and do not round to till East of E. shoulder Devil's Peak.

Sandheads Light—Green triple verticle marks new private landing-stage for Bay and Burma traffic only.

Snaefell Jokul—White occulting light withdrawn for winter.

Patagonia—No summer light south Cape Pilar. This includes Staten Island and Port Stanley.

C. Navarin—Quadruple fog flash (white), one minute intervals (new).

East Cape—Fog flash—single white with single bomb, 30 sec. intervals (new).

Malayan Archipelago—Lights unreliable owing eruptions.

Lay from Cape Somerset to Singapore direct, keeping highest levels.

For the Board:

CATTERTHUN
ST. JUST } *Lights.*
VAN HEDDER

Casualties

Week ending Dec. 18th.

SABLE ISLAND—Green single barbette-tower freighter, number indistinguishable, up-ended, and fore-tank pierced after collision, passed 300-ft. level 2 P.M. Dec. 15th. Watched to water and pithed by Mark Boat.

N. F. BANKS—Postal Packet 162 reports *Halma* freighter (Fowey—St. John's) abandoned, leaking after weather, 46° 15′ N. 50° 15′ W. Crew rescued by Planet liner *Asteroid*. Watched to water and pithed by Postal Packet, Dec. 14th.

KERGUELEN, MARK BOAT reports last call from *Cymena* freighter (Gayer Tong Huk & Co.) taking water and sinking in snow-storm South McDonald Islands. No wreckage recovered. Messages and wills of crew at all A. B. C. offices.

FEZZAN—T. A. D. freighter *Ulema* taken ground during Harmattan on Akakus Range. Under plates strained. Crew at Ghat where repairing Dec. 13th.

BISCAY, MARK BOAT reports *Carducci* (Valandingham Line) slightly spiked in western gorge Point de Benasque. Passengers transferred *Andorra* (Fulton Line). Barcelona Mark Boat salving cargo Dec. 12th.

ASCENSION, MARK BOAT—Wreck of unknown racing-plane, Parden rudder, wire-stiffened xylonite vans, and Harliss engine-seating, sighted and salved 7° 20′ S. 18° 41′ W. Dec. 15th. Photos at all A. B. C. offices.

Missing

No answer to General Call having been received during the last week from following overdues, they are posted as missing:

Atlantis, W. 17630	Canton—Valparaiso
Audhumla, W. 889	Stockholm—Odessa
Berenice, W. 2206	Riga—Vladivostock
Draco, E. 446	Coventry—Puntas Arenas
Tontine, E. 3068	C. Wrath—Ungava
Wu-Sung, E. 41776 . . .	Hankow—Lobito Bay

General Call (all Mark Boats) out for:

Jane Eyre, W. 6990 . . .	Port Rupert—City of Mexico
Santander, W. 5514 . . .	Gobi-Desert—Manila
V. Edmundsun, E. 9690 . .	Kandahar—Fiume

Broke for Obstruction, and Quitting Levels

Valkyrie (racing plane), A. J. Hartley owner, New York (twice warned).

Geisha (racing plane), S. van Cott owner, Philadelphia (twice warned).

Marvel of Peru (racing plane), J. X. Peixoto owner, Rio de Janeiro (twice warned).

For the Board:

Lazareff
McKeough } *Traffic.*
Goldblatt

NOTES

High-Level Sleet

The Northern weather so far shows no sign of improvement. From all quarters come complaints of the unusual prevalence of sleet at the higher levels. Racing-planes and digs alike have suffered severely—the former from unequal deposits of half-frozen slush on their vans (and only those who have "held up" a badly balanced plane in a cross-wind know what that means), and the latter from loaded bows and snow-cased bodies. As a consequence, the Northern and North-western upper levels have been practically abandoned, and the high fliers have returned to the ignoble security of the Three, Five, and Six hundred foot levels. But there remain a few undaunted sun-hunters who, in spite of frozen stays and ice-jammed connecting-rods, still haunt the blue empyrean.

Bat-Boat Racing

The scandals of the past few years have at last moved the yachting world to concerted action in regard to "bat" boat racing.

We have been treated to the spectacle of what are practically keeled racing-planes driven a clear five foot or more above the water, and only eased down to touch their so-called "native element" as they near the line. Judges and starters have been conveniently blind to this absurdity, but the public demonstration off St. Catherine's Light at the Autumn Regattas has borne ample, if tardy, fruit. In the future the "bat" is to be a boat, and the long-unheeded demand of the

true sportsman for "no daylight under mid-keel in smooth water" is in a fair way to be conceded. The new rule severely restricts plane area and lift alike. The gas compartments are permitted both fore and aft, as in the old type, but the water-ballast central tank is rendered obligatory. These things work, if not for perfection, at least for the evolution of a sane and wholesome *waterborne* cruiser. The type of rudder is unaffected by the new rules, so we may expect to see the Long-Davidson make (the patent on which has just expired) come largely into use henceforward, though the strain on the stern-post in turning at speeds over forty miles an hour is admittedly very severe. But bat-boat racing has a great future before it.

Crete and the A. B. C.

The story of the recent Cretan crisis, as told in the *A. B. C. Monthly Report,* is not without humour. Till the 25th October Crete, as all our planet knows, was the sole surviving European repository of "autonomous institutions," "local self-government," and the rest of the archaic lumber devised in the past for the confusion of human affairs. She has lived practically on the tourist traffic attracted by her annual pageants of Parliaments, Boards, Municipal Councils, etc., etc. Last summer the islanders grew wearied, as their premier explained, of "playing at being savages for pennies," and proceeded to pull down all the landing-towers on the island and shut off general communication till such time as the A. B. C. should annex them. For side-splitting comedy we would refer our readers to the correspondence between the Board of Control and the Cretan premier during the "war." However, all's well that ends well. The A. B. C. have taken over the administration of Crete on normal lines; and tourists must go elsewhere to witness the "debates," "resolutions," and "popular movements" of the old days. The only people to suffer will be the Board of Control, which is grievously overworked al-

ready. It is easy enough to condemn the Cretans for their laziness; but when one recalls the large, prosperous, and presumably public-spirited communities which during the last few years have deliberately thrown themselves into the hands of the A. B. C., one cannot be too hard upon St. Paul's old friends.

CORRESPONDENCE

Skylarking on the Equator

To the Editor: Only last week, while crossing the Equator (W. 26-15), I became aware of a furious and irregular cannonading some fifteen or twenty knots S. 4 E. Descending to the 500 ft. level, I found a party of Transylvanian tourists engaged in exploding scores of the largest pattern atmospheric bombs (A. B. C. standard) and, in the intervals of their pleasing labours, firing bow and stern smoke-ring swivels. This orgy—I can give it no other name—went on for at least two hours, and naturally produced violent electric derangements. My compasses, of course, were thrown out, my bow was struck twice, and I received two brisk shocks from the lower platform-rail. On remonstrating, I was told that these "professors" were engaged in scientific experiments. The extent of their "scientific" knowledge may be judged by the fact that they expected to produce (I give their own words) "a little blue sky" if "they went on long enough." This in the heart of the Doldrums at 450 feet! I have no objection to any amount of blue sky in its proper place (it can be found at the 4000 level for practically twelve months out of the year), but I submit, with all deference to the educational needs of Transylvania, that "skylarking" in the centre of a main-travelled road where, at the best of times, electricity literally drips off one's stanchions and screw blades, is unnecessary. When my friends had finished, the road was seared, and blown, and pitted with unequal pressure-layers, spirals, vortices, and readjustments for at least an hour. I pitched badly twice in an upward rush—solely due to these diabolical throw-downs—that came near to wrecking my propeller. Equatorial work at

low levels is trying enough in all conscience without the added terrors of scientific hooliganism in the Doldrums.

Rhyl. J. Vincent Mathen.

[We entirely sympathize with Professor Mathen's views, but till the Board sees fit to further regulate the Southern areas in which scientific experiments may be conducted, we shall always be exposed to the risk which our correspondent describes. Unfortunately, a chimera bombinating in a vacuum is, nowadays, only too capable of producing secondary causes. —*Editor.*]

Answers to Correspondents

Vigilans—The Laws of Auroral Derangements are still imperfectly understood. Any overheated motor may of course "seize" without warning; but so many complaints have reached us of accidents similar to yours while shooting the Aurora that we are inclined to believe with Lavalle that the upper strata of the Aurora Borealis are practically one big electric "leak," and that the paralysis of your engines was due to complete magnetization of all metallic parts. Low-flying planes often "glue up" when near the Magnetic Pole, and there is no reason in science why the same disability should not be experienced at higher levels when the Auroras are "delivering" strongly.

Indignant—On your own showing, you were not under control. That you could not hoist the necessary N. U. C. lights on approaching a traffic-lane because your electrics had short-circuited is a misfortune which might befall any one. The A. B. C., being responsible for the planet's traffic, cannot, however, make allowance for this kind of misfortune. A reference to the Code will show that you were fined on the lower scale.

Planiston—(1) The Five Thousand Kilometre (over-

land) was won last year by L. V. Rautsch: R. M. Rautsch, his brother, in the same week pulling off the Ten Thousand (oversea). R. M.'s average worked out at a fraction over 500 kilometres per hour, thus constituting a record. (2) Theoretically, there is no limit to the lift of a dirigible. For commercial and practical purposes 15,000 tons is accepted as the most manageable.

PATERFAMILIAS—None whatever. He is liable for direct damage both to your chimneys and any collateral damage caused by fall of bricks into garden, etc., etc. Bodily inconvenience and mental anguish may be included, but the average courts are not, as a rule, swayed by sentiment. If you can prove that his grapnel removed *any* portion of your roof, you had better rest your case on decoverture of domicile (see Parkins *v.* Duboulay). We sympathize with your position, but the night of the 14th was stormy and confused, and—you may have to anchor on a stranger's chimney yourself some night. *Verbum sap!*

ALDEBARAN—(1) War, as a paying concern, ceased in 1967. (2) The Convention of London expressly reserves to every nation the right of waging war so long as it does not interfere with the traffic *and all that implies*. (3) The A. B. C. was constituted in 1949.

L. M. D.—(1) Keep her full head-on at half power, taking advantage of the lulls to speed up and creep into it. She will strain much less this way than in quartering across a gale. (2) Nothing is to be gained by reversing into a following gale, and there is always risk of a turn-over. (3) The formulæ for stun'sle brakes are uniformly unreliable, and will continue to be so as long as air is compressible.

PEGAMOID—(1) Personally we prefer glass or flux compounds to any other material for winter work nose-caps as being absolutely non-hygroscopic. (2) We cannot recommend any particular make.

PULMONAR—(1) For the symptoms you describe, try the Gobi Desert Sanatoria. The low levels of most of the Saharan Sanatoria are against them except at the outset of the

disease. (2) We do not recommend boarding-houses or hotels in this column.

BEGINNER—On still days the air above a large inhabited city being slightly warmer—*i. e.*, thinner—than the atmosphere of the surrounding country, a plane drops a little on entering the rarefied area, precisely as a ship sinks a little in fresh water. Hence the phenomena of "jolt" and your "inexplicable collisions" with factory chimneys. In air, as on earth, it is safest to fly high.

EMERGENCY—There is only one rule of the road in air, earth, and water. Do you want the firmament to yourself?

PICCIOLA—Both Poles have been overdone in Art and Literature. Leave them to Science for the next twenty years. You did not send a stamp with your verses.

NORTH NIGERIA—The Mark Boat was within her right in warning you off the Reserve. The shadow of a low-flying dirigible scares the game. You can buy all the photos you need at Sokoto.

NEW ERA—It is not etiquette to overcross an A. B. C. official's boat without asking permission. He is one of the body responsible for the planet's traffic, and for that reason must not be interfered with. You, presumably, are out on your own business or pleasure, and must leave him alone. For humanity's sake don't try to be "democratic."

EXCORIATED—All inflators chafe sooner or later. You must go on till your skin hardens by practice. Meantime vaseline.

REVIEW

The Life of Xavier Lavalle

(*Reviewed by Réné Talland. École Aëronautique, Paris*)

Ten years ago Lavalle, "that imperturbable dreamer of the heavens," as Lazareff hailed him, gathered together the fruits of a lifetime's labour, and gave it, with well-justified contempt, to a world bound hand and foot to Barald's Theory of Vertices and "compensating electric nodes." "They shall see," he wrote—in that immortal postscript to *The Heart of the Cyclone*—"the Laws whose existence they derided written in fire *beneath* them."

"But even here," he continues, "there is no finality. Better a thousand times my conclusions should be discredited than that my dead name should lie across the threshold of the temple of Science—a bar to further inquiry."

So died Lavalle—a prince of the Powers of the Air, and even at his funeral Céllier jested at "him who had gone to discover the secrets of the Aurora Borealis."

If I choose thus to be banal, it is only to remind you that Céllier's theories are to-day as exploded as the ludicrous deductions of the Spanish school. In the place of their fugitive and warring dreams we have, definitely, Lavalle's Law of the Cyclone which he surprised in darkness and cold at the foot of the overarching throne of the Aurora Borealis. It is there that I, intent on my own investigations, have passed and repassed a hundred times the worn leonine face, white as the snow beneath him, furrowed with wrinkles like the seams and gashes upon the North Cape; the nervous hand, integrally a part of the mechanism of his flighter; and above all, the wonderful lambent eyes turned to the zenith.

"Master," I would cry as I moved respectfully beneath him, "what is it you seek to-day?" and always the answer, clear and without doubt, from above: "The old secret, my son!"

The immense egotism of youth forced me on my own path, but (cry of the human always!) had I known—if I had known —I would many times have bartered my poor laurels for the privilege, such as Tinsley and Herrera possess, of having aided him in his monumental researches.

It is to the filial piety of Victor Lavalle that we owe the two volumes consecrated to the ground-life of his father, so full of the holy intimacies of the domestic hearth. Once returned from the abysms of the utter North to that little house upon the outskirts of Meudon, it was not the philosopher, the daring observer, the man of iron energy that imposed himself on his family, but a fat and even plaintive jester, a farceur incarnate and kindly, the co-equal of his children, and, it must be written, not seldom the comic despair of Madame Lavalle, who, as she writes five years after the marriage, to her venerable mother, found "in this unequalled intellect whose name I bear the abandon of a large and very untidy boy." Here is her letter:

"Xavier returned from I do not know where at midnight, absorbed in calculations on the eternal question of his Aurora —*la belle Aurore,* whom I begin to hate. Instead of anchoring—I had set out the guide-light above our roof, so he had but to descend and fasten the plane—he wandered, profoundly distracted, above the town with his anchor down! Figure to yourself, dear mother, it is the roof of the mayor's house that the grapnel first engages! That I do not regret, for the mayor's wife and I are not sympathetic; but when Xavier uproots my pet araucaria and bears it across the garden into the conservatory I protest at the top of my voice. Little Victor in his night-clothes runs to the window, enormously amused at the parabolic flight without reason, for it is too dark to see the grapnel, of my prized tree. The Mayor of Meudon thunders at our door in the name of the Law, demanding, I suppose, my husband's head. Here is the conver-

sation through the megaphone—Xavier is two hundred feet above us:

"'Mons. Lavalle, descend and make reparation for outrage of domicile. Descend, Mons. Lavalle!'

"No one answers.

"'Xavier Lavalle, in the name of the Law, descend and submit to process for outrage of domicile.'

"Xavier, roused from his calculations, comprehending only the last words: 'Outrage of domicile? My dear mayor, who is the man that has corrupted thy Julie?'

"The mayor, furious, 'Xavier Lavalle——'

"Xavier, interrupting: 'I have not that felicity. I am only a dealer in cyclones!'

"My faith, he raised one then! All Meudon attended in the streets, and my Xavier, after a long time comprehending what he had done, excused himself in a thousand apologies. At last the reconciliation was effected in our house over a supper at two in the morning—Julie in a wonderful costume of compromises, and I have her and the mayor pacified in bed in the blue room."

And on the next day, while the mayor rebuilds his roof, her Xavier departs anew for the Aurora Borealis, there to commence his life's work. M. Victor Lavalle tells us of that historic collision (*en plane*) on the flank of Hecla between Herrera, then a pillar of the Spanish school, and the man destined to confute his theories and lead him intellectually captive. Even through the years, the immense laugh of Lavalle as he sustains the Spaniard's wrecked plane, and cries: "Courage! *I* shall not fall till I have found Truth, and I hold *you* fast!" rings like the call of trumpets. This is that Lavalle whom the world, immersed in speculations of immediate gain, did not know nor suspect—the Lavalle whom they adjudged to the last a pedant and a theorist.

The human, as apart from the scientific, side (developed in his own volumes) of his epoch-making discoveries is marked with a simplicity, clarity, and good sense beyond praise. I would specially refer such as doubt the sustaining influence of

ancestral faith upon character and will to the eleventh and nineteenth chapters, in which are contained the opening and consummation of the Tellurionical Records extending over nine years. Of their tremendous significance be sure that the modest house at Meudon knew as little as that the Records would one day be the planet's standard in all official meteorology. It was enough for them that their Xavier—this son, this father, this husband—ascended periodically to commune with powers, it might be angelic, beyond their comprehension, and that they united daily in prayers for his safety.

"Pray for me," he says upon the eve of each of his excursions, and returning, with an equal simplicity, he renders thanks "after supper in the little room where he kept his barometers."

To the last Lavalle was a Catholic of the old school, accepting—he who had looked into the very heart of the lightnings—the dogmas of papal infallibility, of absolution, of confession—of relics great and small. Marvellous—enviable contradiction!

The completion of the Tellurionical Records closed what Lavalle himself was pleased to call the theoretical side of his labours—labours from which the youngest and least impressionable planeur might well have shrunk. He had traced through cold and heat, across the deeps of the oceans, with instruments of his own invention, over the inhospitable heart of the polar ice and the sterile visage of the deserts, league by league, patiently, unweariedly, remorselessly, from their ever-shifting cradle under the magnetic pole to their exalted death-bed in the utmost ether of the upper atmosphere—each one of the Isoconical Tellurions—Lavalle's Curves, as we call them to-day. He had disentangled the nodes of their intersections, assigning to each its regulated period of flux and reflux. Thus equipped, he summons Herrera and Tinsley, his pupils, to the final demonstration as calmly as though he were ordering his flighter for some mid-day journey to Marseilles.

"I have proved my thesis," he writes. "It remains now only that you should witness the proof. We go to Manila

to-morrow. A cyclone will form off the Pescadores S. 17 E. in four days, and will reach its maximum intensity twenty-seven hours after inception. It is there I will show you the Truth."

A letter heretofore unpublished from Herrera to Madame Lavalle tells us how the Master's prophecy was verified.

I will not destroy its simplicity or its significance by any attempt to quote. Note well, though, that Herrera's preoccupation throughout that day and night of superhuman strain is always for the Master's bodily health and comfort. "At such a time," he writes, "I forced the Master to take the broth"; or "I made him put on the fur coat as you told me." Nor is Tinsley (see pp. 184, 85) less concerned. He prepares the nourishment. He cooks eternally, imperturbably, suspended in the chaos of which the Master interprets the meaning. Tinsley, bowed down with the laurels of both hemispheres, raises himself to yet nobler heights in his capacity of a devoted *chef*. It is almost unbelievable! And yet men write of the Master as cold, aloof, self-contained. Such characters do not elicit the joyous and unswerving devotion which Lavalle commanded throughout life. Truly, we have changed very little in the course of the ages! The secrets of earth and sky and the links that bind them, we felicitate ourselves we are on the road to discover; but our neighbours' heart and mind we misread, we misjudge, we condemn—now as ever. Let all, then, who love a man read these most human, tender, and wise volumes.

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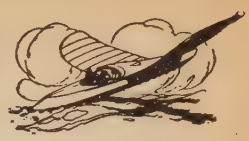

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THE FOUR ANGELS

As Adam lay a-dreaming beneath the Apple Tree,
The Angel of the Earth came down, and offered
Earth in fee.
But Adam did not need it,
Nor the plough he would not speed it,
Singing:—"Earth and Water, Air and Fire,
What more can mortal man desire?"
(The Apple Tree's in bud.)

As Adam lay a-dreaming beneath the Apple Tree,
The Angel of the Waters offered all the Seas in fee.
But Adam would not take 'em,
Nor the ships he wouldn't make 'em,
Singing:—"Water, Earth and Air and Fire,
What more can mortal man desire?"
(The Apple Tree's in leaf.)

As Adam lay a-dreaming beneath the Apple Tree,
The Angel of the Air he offered all the Air in fee.
But Adam did not crave it,
Nor the flight he wouldn't brave it,

Singing:—"Air and Water, Earth and Fire,
What more can mortal man desire?"
(The Apple Tree's in bloom.)

As Adam lay a-dreaming beneath the Apple Tree,
The Angel of the Fire rose up and not a word said he.
But he wished a fire and made it,
And in Adam's heart he laid it,
Singing:—"Fire, Fire, burning Fire,
Stand up and reach your heart's desire!"
(The Apple Blossom's set.)

As Adam was a-working outside of Eden-Wall,
He used the Earth, he used the Seas, he used the Air and all;
And out of black disaster
He arose to be the master
Of Earth and Water, Air and Fire,
But never reached his heart's desire!
(The Apple Tree's cut down!)

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